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The Routledge Handbook of Hellenistic Philosophy

Edited by Kelly Arenson

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

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Kelly Arenson is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Duquesne University. She is the author of *Health and Hedonism in Plato and Epicurus* (2019).

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Edited by Kelly Arenson

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ABBREVIATIONS

Acad.	Cicero, *Academica* [*On Academic Skepticism*]
Adv. Col.	Plutarch, *Adversus Colotem* [*Against Colotes*]
BS	M. Boeri and R. Salles, *Los Filósofos Estoicos*
C. Cels.	Origin, *Contra Celsum* [*Against Celsus*]
Comm. Not.	Plutarch, *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* [*On Common Conceptions Against the Stoics*]
De Ab.	Porphyry, *De Abstinentia* [*On Abstinence*]
De An.	Aristotle, *On the Soul*
De Div.	Cicero, *De Divinatione* [*On Divination*]
De Elect.	Philodemus, *De Electionibus et Fugis*
De Fac.	Plutarch, *De Facie in Orbe Lunae* [*On the Face in the Orb of the Moon*]
De Fat.	Cicero, *De Fato* [*On Fate*]
De Fin.	Cicero, *De Finibus* [*On Moral Ends*]
De Leg.	Cicero, *De Legibus* [*On the Laws*]
De Off.	Cicero, *De Officiis* [*On Duties*]
De Or.	Cicero, *De Oratore* [*On the Orator*]
De Piet.	Philodemus, *De Pietate* [*On Piety*]
De Rep.	Cicero, *De Re Publica* [*On the Republic*]
DG	H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci*
Diss.	Epictetus, *Dissertationes* [*Discourses*]
DK	H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*
DL	Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*
DND	Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* [*On the Nature of the Gods*]
DRN	Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* [*On the Nature of Things*]
Ecl.	Stobaeus, *Eclogai* [*Selections*]
Ench.	Epictetus, *Enchiridion* [*The Handbook*]
Ep.	Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* [*Letters on Ethics*]
Ep. Hdt.	Epicurus, *Epistula ad Herodotum* [*Letter to Herodotus*]
Ep. Men.	Epicurus, *Epistula ad Menoeceum* [*Letter to Menoeceus*]
Ep. Pyth.	Epicurus, *Epistula ad Pythoclem* [*Letter to Pythocles*]
Gen. Corr.	Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*

IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*
Int.	Aristotle, *On Interpretation*
KD	Epicurus, *Kuriai Doxai* [*Principal Doctrines*]
LM	A. Laks and G.W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*
LS	A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*
M	Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* [*Against the Professors*]
Med.	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*
Mem.	Xenophon, *Memorabilia*
Metaph.	Aristotle, *Metaphysics*
NE	Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Non Posse	Plutarch, *Non Posse Suaviter Vivi Secundum Epicurum* [*That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible*]
NQ	Seneca, *Quaestiones Naturales*
PE	Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* [*Preparation for the Gospel*]
PH	Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes* [*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*]
PHerc.	*Papyri Herculanenses* [Herculaneum Papyri]
Plac.	Aetius, *De Placita Philosophorum* [*Opinions of the Philosophers*]
Rep.	Plato, *Republic*
Stoic. Rep.	Plutarch, *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* [*On the Self-contradictions of the Stoics*]
SV	Epicurus, *Sententiae Vaticanae* [*Vatican Sayings*]
SVF	H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*
Tht.	Plato, *Theaetetus*
Tim.	Plato, *Timaeus*
Tusc.	Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* [*Tusculan Disputations*]
Us.	H. Usener, *Epicurea*

INTRODUCTION

Kelly Arenson

The Hellenistic era refers to the period between the death of Alexander the Great (323 BCE) and the Battle of Actium (31 BCE), where the Roman leader Octavian defeated the last Greek dynasty by conquering the forces of Mark Antony and Cleopatra. During the roughly three hundred years of the Hellenistic era, Greek culture spread throughout Asia Minor and the rest of Persia, courtesy of Alexander's conquest of these areas and the governance by his Greek generals after his death. Hellenistic philosophy concerns the three main schools that emerged during this period: Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism.

A brief summary of the major views of each of the three main schools is in order for those readers who are encountering Hellenistic philosophy for the first time. Although it is difficult to capture the entire approach of each school in a small space, it should be possible to adumbrate the main features of Hellenistic views by providing a general sense of the epistemology, ethics, and physics of the era. (Readers looking for more background on the history of each school and its figureheads should consult the chapters in Part 1.)

The Epicureans were egoistic hedonists: their main goal in life was personal pleasure, which they described as the absence of pain in the body [*aponia*] and disturbance in the soul [*ataraxia*]. The school is named after its ancient Greek founder Epicurus; other prominent members include the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius as well as the later thinkers Philodemus of Gadara and Diogenes of Oinoanda. Epicureans believed that the basic building blocks of reality are atoms, which circulate in a void of infinite magnitude. According to Epicureans, the study of physics is essential for a proper understanding of perception, truth, and knowledge, and also for living well. One of the best examples of the influence of the Epicureans' physical theory on ethics is their claim that death should not be feared because it is a state lacking sense perception: the experience of anything through the senses (e.g., pain after death) requires a living soul, which, according to the Epicureans, is composed of atoms and dies along with the body.

Like the Epicureans, the Stoics pursued *ataraxia*, but many scholars would argue that this is where the similarities more or less end. The word 'Stoic' derives from the ancient Greek word *stoa poikilē*, which simply means 'painted porch', a place in the ancient Athenian marketplace where members of the school supposedly spent their time. The Greek philosopher Zeno of Citium is credited with founding the school, which was transformed in significant ways by later members, particularly its third head, Chrysippus.

Stoicism, especially the ethics, persisted well into the Roman Imperial period, when it was taken up by Epictetus, Seneca the Younger, and the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Whereas the Epicureans believed the good is pleasure, the Stoics believed it is virtue, which they claimed should be sought to the best of one's ability even though it is rarely, if ever, fully achieved. Later Stoics emphasized living a simple life, one focused on what is up to us and akin to our nature. As for their natural philosophy, Stoics believed the universe consists of physical material; they also made significant developments in logic and the study of language.

The philosophy of the skeptics was arguably less unified than that of the other two schools, owing to the fact that its members espoused many different perspectives on the methodology and goal of skeptical inquiry. The two main branches of ancient skepticism were the Pyrrhonian and the Academic. The former owes its name to the Greek thinker Pyrrho of Elis, about whom we know fairly little. We do know that his philosophy was resurrected a couple centuries later by Aenesidemus, and a few centuries after that by Sextus Empiricus, whose texts are our main source for ancient Pyrrhonism. Skeptics of the Pyrrhonian variety formulated various "modes" or methods for refuting any claim, the result of which is the suspension of judgment, an approach they claimed is accompanied by *ataraxia*. The Academic skeptical tradition was inaugurated by the Greek philosopher Arcesilaus, who developed it from Plato's Academy, of which he was a figurehead, and was continued by Carneades and others after him. Academic Skeptics employed Socratic methods of investigation and argumentation, and tended to focus on refuting Stoic views in particular. They determined nothing and suspended judgment, while also attempting to articulate concepts that would allow them to live in the world without committing to the truth of appearances.

The beginning of Hellenistic philosophy is marked off fairly clearly, but its end is not: many of the schools of the Hellenistic era continued to flourish long after the Battle of Actium. For instance, Stoicism had numerous prominent adherents in Imperial Rome (27 BCE to ~180 CE), and Pyrrhonian Skepticism underwent a revival. Nevertheless, it has been argued that post-Hellenistic followers of the Hellenistic schools did not significantly alter their respective school's thought,[1] and thus they should not be included in the scope of Hellenistic philosophy proper. Indeed, other guides to Hellenistic philosophy usually end their coverage at around 100 BCE, leaving out the skeptic Aenesidemus and the revival of Pyrrhonism, as well as the later Epicureans Philodemus and Diogenes of Oinoanda. In addition, many guides do not treat in their own right the Imperial Roman Stoics, which is an interesting omission given that much of the current fascination with Stoic ethics as a form of self-help or psychotherapy has its roots in the writings of the Stoics of that period.[2] Because their philosophies are timely and accessible, it is unsurprising that these Stoics regularly find their way onto college reading lists.

Although it may be controversial to do so, this *Handbook* covers not only the philosophies of the Hellenistic era proper but also their later revivals. Even if later "Hellenistic" philosophers did not significantly alter the doctrines of their original schools—a claim that some scholars of later Skepticism and Stoicism would surely dispute—they nevertheless made significant contributions to the history of Hellenistic thought. At the very least, the existence of later "Hellenistic" thinkers points to the persistent importance of Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism in the ancient Greek and Roman world; Hellenistic philosophy did not end at the Battle of Actium, even if the Hellenistic era did.

This *Handbook* aims to extend the coverage of Hellenistic philosophy, but it does not aim to cover every last topic, even if does aim to cover more figures than previous guides.

The chapters are designed to appeal to a wide range of interests, covering specific topics addressed by individual schools as well as broader topics across several schools. For instance, there are chapters dedicated solely to Stoic epistemology, but also a single chapter on piety and theology in Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Pyrrhonian Skepticism. Given that some of the chapters are broad and comparative, there is an inevitable amount of overlap, which is intentional: the mix of specific and broader chapters will enable readers to gain a sense not only for how an idea took shape in a particular school, but also for how ideas flowed from school to school. This *Handbook* is designed in part to highlight the ways in which the various schools refuted or reformulated each other's arguments, one of the more fascinating aspects of Hellenistic philosophy.

The Routledge Handbook of Hellenistic Philosophy is divided into six parts. Parts 1 and 2 provide general overviews of the schools as well as background material. Parts 3, 4, and 5 are organized by theme rather than by school, and they address the core issues in Hellenistic philosophy: roughly, epistemology, physics, and ethics. Chapters in these parts range from treatments of specific topics to broader treatments of several schools. Finally, Part 6 considers the contemporary relevance of Hellenistic thought.

Part 1: Methods and Background

Part 1 (Chapters 1–4) addresses the methodology of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Skeptics. This section introduces the history and figureheads of each school and fleshes out the connections among the parts of each school's philosophies. The aim of the chapters of Part 1 is to give readers a sense for what it meant to do philosophy in the Hellenistic world.

This *Handbook* begins with J. Clerk Shaw's chapter on the relation among the parts of Epicurean philosophy. Shaw explores the Epicurean commitment to philosophy as a means to living well, and argues that even physics has practical benefits according to Epicureans: studying nature helps us replace false, troubling beliefs with true, calming ones, and gives us a better sense for how important elements of human happiness (mainly pleasure, pain, and desire) should be featured in our lives if we wish to avoid disturbance and achieve tranquility.

William Stephens introduces us to the major players in Stoic philosophy, providing detailed and intriguing accounts of their lives and philosophies. Stephens shows that Stoicism, unlike other major ancient Greek schools, did not have a main figurehead who established doctrines for the entire school; rather, Stoicism was more of a collection of the views of many of its members, resulting in a system that evolved for several centuries.

Renata Ziemińska outlines the offensive and defensive argumentative strategies employed by Pyrrhonian and Academic Skeptics. Offensively, these skeptics argued for the suspension of all judgment; defensively, they attempted to address charges that their philosophy was impractical, inconsistent, and self-refuting. Ziemińska shows how skeptical strategies shifted over time: Pyrrhonists solved some problems that Academic Skeptics did not, and vice-versa.

One of our most important sources for the philosophies of the Hellenistic era is the Roman orator and statesman Cicero, who Thornton Lockwood contends was not merely reporting Hellenistic views to a Roman readership but was presenting them in a critical mode in accordance with the methodology of the philosophical school to which he ascribed, namely, Academic Skepticism. Lockwood shows that Cicero was a philosophizer in his own right, one who was inspired by the views of Epicureans and Stoics even though he was highly suspicious of their dogma.

Part 2: Early Influences

In Part 2 (Chapters 5–10) we address the connections between Hellenistic thinkers and their philosophical predecessors, particularly the Cynics, Presocratics, Socrates, and Aristotle. The idea is not to cover every philosophical influence on the Hellenistic thinkers, but to home in on specific, significant areas of influence that will prepare readers for the later chapters focused on Hellenistic doctrines themselves.

Stefano Maso examines the influence of the Atomists and Cyrenaics on Epicurean physics, epistemology, ethics, and psychology. He considers the atomistic materialism of Leucippus and Democritus, showing that their notion of the nature of the atom differed from Epicurus', even if they all agreed that atoms are the fundamental building blocks of reality. Maso also investigates the ways in which Epicureans disagreed with Cyrenaic hedonism, especially its view that we should pursue pleasures that are instantaneous and provide continual variety, and its claim that bodily pleasures are worse than mental ones.

Christopher Turner addresses the ancient Cynic roots of Stoic ethics. He begins by dealing with problems regarding the availability and interpretation of Cynic texts, and then introduces the basic features of the Cynic conception of happiness, showing that it emphasizes flexibility and simplicity, two key notions in the Stoics' own practical advice for attaining freedom and tranquility.

Ricardo Salles investigates the place of the Stoics in the tradition inaugurated by Presocratics of describing the material components of natural beings in terms of the four sensible elements: fire, air, water, and earth. Salles considers in detail our main source for the elemental theory of the Stoics, focusing on why they centered their physical system on principles that neither they nor many Presocratics considered to be elements, namely, god and matter.

Jacob Klein compares Stoic and Aristotelian accounts of virtues of character and intellect. He considers each school's understanding of human nature and shows that they differ regarding the role of reason and non-rational motivations in ethical dispositions and actions: the Stoics believed that virtue consists of the right use of one's rational faculty, whereas Aristotle claimed that virtue involves not only reason but also feelings and appetites. In addition, Klein compares Stoic and Aristotelian views on the sufficiency of virtue for happiness, moral epistemology, and the nature of the sage.

The last two chapters of this section consider Hellenistic responses to accounts of the life and philosophy of Socrates. René Brouwer presents the reaction of early Stoics—especially Zeno of Citium—to accounts of Socratic ethics. Brouwer shows that, unlike Academic Skeptics, Stoics saw Socrates as more than a proponent of a skeptical method of inquiry; they believed he was a thinker with a particular ethical agenda—which they shared—that was focused on articulating the value of virtue, the relation between virtue and knowledge, and the theory that virtues are interrelated. Stoics aimed to approach these ethical concerns with an attitude of humility and fallibility, just as they believed Socrates had done.

Svavar Hrafn Svavarsson closes out the section with a discussion of the ways in which the Academic Skeptics Arcesilaus and, after him, Carneades were inspired by Socrates' argumentative techniques. Svavarsson shows that Academic Skepticism was influenced especially by Socrates' claim that he knew nothing and by his dialectical method of inquiry, which Academic skeptics used as an argumentative technique against the claims of several ancient schools.

Part 3: Soul, Perception, and Knowledge

Part 3 (Chapters 11–16) covers a mix of epistemology and psychology—particularly the various Hellenistic conceptions of the soul and its capacities (e.g., the emotions)—and Epicurean and Stoic theories of truth, knowledge, and belief. Part 3 also includes two multi-school chapters: one on skeptical defenses against the opposition's charge that skeptical attitudes are incompatible with action, and the other on skeptical critiques of criteria for truth offered by the Epicureans and Stoics.

In the section's first chapter, Ian Hensley tackles Stoic epistemology, particularly the concepts of assent, impression, opinion, scientific knowledge, and cognition. He articulates the differences between the Stoic sage and all other humans, and points out a commonality: wise and unwise people alike experience cognitive impressions, which are the starting point for the latter's epistemic development.

Tamer Nawar examines Stoic psychology, considering the soul's composition, function, relation to the body and identity, as well as the nature of certain psychological processes. He situates the Stoic notion of the soul within their theory that only corporeal things have causal power, and he concludes the article with a brief discussion of the Stoic psychology of the passions and moral choice.

Epicurean epistemology is the subject of Andree Hahmann's chapter. He focuses on the Epicureans' claim that all perceptions are true, and argues that this includes not only sense impressions but also all mental images, such as dreams and hallucinations. Hahmann then relates the Epicureans' account of truth to their atomic theory of perception, exploring the latter through various examples of sense deception.

Epicurean attitudes toward irrational fears of death are the topic of Emily Austin's chapter, which touches on epistemology as well as psychology. She closely examines the Epicureans' main arguments against such fears, carefully constructs their premises regarding perception and the soul, and considers potential objections. Austin shows that their main arguments seem to address only the fear of *being* dead, not fears about one's experiences during the process of dying, such as pain. She contends that, in order to combat the latter type of fears, Epicureans offered coping techniques rather than rational arguments, and they believed that some versions of the fear of death are ineliminable.

Whitney Schwab considers several ancient skeptical responses to the *apraxia*, or inaction, charge: if skeptics do not commit to beliefs, then they do not commit to the belief that the world is as it appears to a perceiver, yet such a belief would seem to be required in order to justify taking any action. The result, according to the objection, is total inaction. Schwab mainly focuses on skeptical replies to the Stoics' version of this charge, particularly the responses provided by the Academic Skeptics Arcesilaus and Carneades, as well as by the Pyrrhonian Skeptic Sextus Empiricus.

Scott Aikin juxtaposes several Hellenistic theories in his chapter on skeptical responses to Epicurean and Stoic criteria for truth. He shows that both Epicureanism and Stoicism rely on the idea that false opinions must be replaced with true ones, which, though veridical, diverge significantly from popular beliefs. What is therefore essential to the success of these schools' philosophy is a criterion for distinguishing truth from falsity. Aikin examines skeptical critiques of such a criterion, focusing on skeptical arguments against the Epicureans' claim that all perceptions are true and the Stoics' position that there is a class of impressions—those called 'kataleptic'—that are always consistent with reality.

Part 4: First Principles, Nature, and Teleology

Part 4 (Chapters 17–22) concerns physics and teleology, focusing on Hellenistic conceptions of nature and the basic principles of existence, the ramifications of Epicurean and Stoic physical theories for these schools' respective positions on free will, and the Academic Skeptics' contributions to Hellenistic debates on fate and determinism. Multi-school chapters compare Stoic, Epicurean, and Skeptical ideas on language and piety.

In the section's opening chapter, Jan Maximilian Robitzsch presents Epicurean ontology. He investigates how Epicureans use their atomic system to account for the existence and composition of all entities. Atoms and void are the basic components of reality, and Robitzsch considers how this is true even for entities that might be understood as conceptual or incorporeal, such as time, the gods, and thoughts.

If everything everywhere can be explained in terms of the collision of atoms in an infinite void, as the Epicureans claim, how is it not the case that the natural world and the humans in it are causally determined? The Epicureans' response to this question is considered by Attila Németh, who presents their positions on freedom and teleology. He situates their anti-teleological views among the teleological theories of their predecessors—the Presocratics, Plato, and Aristotle—and examines Epicurean conceptions of agency, moral responsibility, and the infamous 'swerve,' the random motion of atoms that was intended to account for indeterminacy.

Anna Maria Ioppolo investigates the Stoics' conception of nature and the place of humans within it. She shows that the Stoics had no single description of nature—it was understood by some heads of the school as human nature, by others as cosmic nature, and by yet others as both. The last of these three views belonged to the early Stoic Chrysippus, who argued that nature is a rational principle that orders the whole universe. Naturally, this raises the problem of determinism, which Ioppolo considers also in the Stoic Zeno's account of fate. She explains that Chrysippus' distinction among types of causes was an attempt to allow for moral responsibility in the fatalist system articulated by Zeno.

Catherine Atherton considers the Epicurean and Stoic views on the relation among language, logic, the world, and education. She begins by addressing each school's account of the origins of language, focusing on their theories regarding etymology, the vocalization of sounds, and naming. Of concern also is the connection between speech and thoughts, as well as the complex theory of Stoic grammar. Atherton shows that the Stoics saw rhetoric as an important part of proper philosophical training, whereas the Epicureans saw no need for education in rhetoric, in keeping with their desire to avoid political activity.

Freedom is revisited in James Allen's treatment of the Academic Skeptic Carneades' dialectical response to Epicurean and Stoic views on fate. Carneades agrees with the Epicureans, against the Stoics, that we should reject causal determinism. But he agrees with the Stoics, against the Epicureans, that every proposition is either true or false, including ones about the future. Allen considers also Carneades' skeptical response to the Epicurean swerve as well as to the Stoics' view that voluntary action is possible despite determinism.

The section closes with a multi-school chapter by Harald Thorsrud, who presents the concepts of god and piety in Epicureanism and Stoicism—two schools that argued in some sense that the good life is to become like god—and then examines critiques of these schools' positions offered by Pyrrhonian Skeptics. This chapter also considers Epicurean and Stoic accounts of the nature of the gods and the ideal and proper human attitude toward them, and deals with epistemological questions faced by these schools about the source and adequacy of human knowledge of the divine. In the end, Thorsrud shows that despite

Pyrrhonian Skeptics' criticisms of religious dogma, they might nevertheless be motivated to engage in customary religious practices because of attitudes that are not based on beliefs.

Part 5: Ethics, Politics, and Society

The ethical and political dimensions of Hellenistic philosophy are explored in Part 5 (Chapters 23–28), which focuses on the moral goals of the various schools (e.g., tranquility, pleasure, virtue, happiness), as well as Hellenistic accounts of how mortal needs and desires influence humans' development into ethical, rational agents.

The section opens with Casey Perin's treatment of *ataraxia* [tranquility] in early Pyrrhonian skepticism and especially in its Imperial Roman revival. Perin considers whether goal-directed activity is consistent with skepticism: it would seem that the pursuit of a goal entails committing to, rather than suspending judgment about, a belief concerning the goal's worthiness. He also considers why Pyrrhonists set *ataraxia* as their target instead of some other end. Can skeptics seek tranquility without becoming dogmatists?

The next three chapters cover various aspects of Epicurean ethics. Benjamin Rider tackles the fundamentals of Epicurean pleasure, showing that their hedonism has a eudaimonist framework, meaning that it aims not at securing every available pleasure but at an overall happy, pain-free life. Rider addresses the sticky issue of the Epicurean classification of different types of pleasure, our understanding of which derives mainly from Cicero's *De Finibus*, a controversial source. Rider concludes his chapter with a look at the overall shape of the Epicurean good life: the mind is free of anxiety stemming from irrational fears, the body experiences minimal pain, and there is a proper understanding of nature and the limits of human desire.

Anna Christensen takes up Epicurean attitudes regarding other people: as egoistic hedonists, how did Epicureans deal with politics, friendships, and community? Christensen shows that although they typically avoided public life, they sought out communities of like-minded individuals, with whom they could cultivate lasting relationships aimed at promoting tranquility and joy. She concludes that Epicurean egoism is not inconsistent with genuine feelings for others.

Michael McOsker examines the therapeutic hedonism of later Epicureans, particularly that of Philodemus of Gadara, a first-century BCE thinker who spent much time in Italy. McOsker shows that Philodemus conceived of therapy as medicine: the Epicurean 'doctor' diagnoses the 'patient,' then cuts out the disease as if wielding a scalpel. Epicurean 'physicians' tailored their therapeutic tactics to each patient's maladies—most likely false beliefs about death, the gods, and our desires—with the goal of eliminating anxiety and engendering happiness.

The section continues with two chapters on Stoic ethics, treated in its own right and through the lens of skeptical critiques. Georgia Mouroutsou takes up the moral philosophy of the main Stoics in Imperial Rome—Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius—whose prescriptions for life have come to form part of contemporary self-help philosophies. Mouroutsou examines how these later Stoics prioritized ethics above other philosophical concerns, such as epistemology or physics: they pursued philosophy as a means to understanding and eventually eradicating the passions. She argues that this concern is what ultimately unites later Stoic thinkers, despite differences in philosophical style and background.

In the final chapter of this section, Christiana Olfert tracks the debate among Stoics and Academic Skeptics about the proper goal of action. She begins by analyzing the Stoic account of moral development, focusing on what it means to live according to right reason

as well as the role that our primary, uncorrupted impulses play in achieving happiness. The Stoics proposed "aiming well"—that is, trying as hard as one can to live in accordance with nature—as the highest good, which the Academic Skeptics claimed was an incoherent goal and insufficient for living well. Olfert contends that although scholars tend to juxtapose only the epistemological views of the two schools, it makes sense to do so also for the ethical views: we gain a greater understanding of the refinements each side made to their philosophies in light of their opponents' criticisms.

Part 6: The Hellenistic Legacy in Contemporary Issues

Part 6 (Chapters 29–35), the volume's final section, considers the relevance of Hellenistic thought to contemporary issues in medical ethics, psychotherapy, environmental ethics, politics, feminism, and modern-day skepticism. This *Handbook* aims to leave the reader with the belief that Hellenistic philosophy continues to inform many of the ethical, epistemological, and political aspects of modern life.

Richard Bett articulates several important differences between ancient skepticism and its contemporary incarnation, and then considers how the former might intervene in a controversy in recent Anglophone philosophy over whether skeptical ways of thought are natural or necessary. Bett crafts a potential response mainly from the perspective of Sextus Empiricus, who would not have considered this to be a simple issue: there is good reason to believe Sextus takes everyday, non-skeptical attitudes about the world—attitudes that would seem to be required for normal life—to be natural, yet his position on the naturalness of skepticism itself is ambiguous.

The next three chapters consider how we might apply Stoicism to various aspects of contemporary life. James Dunson explores the relevance of Stoicism to contemporary bioethics, arguing that the former serves as an important basis from which to develop challenges to and a deeper understanding of the methodologies and theories at work in medical ethics. Dunson shows that Stoicism offers an important conception of individual autonomy, one that he argues has interesting significance for debates regarding end-of-life issues, particularly physician-assisted suicide and the question of how to define death.

Massimo Pigliucci considers the relevance of Stoic ethics to everyday living, beginning by combatting the view that the Stoic sage is a heartless creature who suppresses all emotion: Stoics aim to avoid negative emotions and cultivate healthy ones, such as joy and love. Pigliucci argues that we can achieve this goal by following the Stoics' advice to pursue virtue, understand the limits of our desires, respect the dignity of others, avoid rash judgments, and acknowledge our roles in life and their accompanying duties. He concludes the chapter by articulating how a Stoic might respond in three different scenarios: how we might deal with our desires, our attitudes toward other people, and mistaken first impressions.

Simon Shogry applies the Stoics' theory of cosmopolitanism—put very simply, the theory that we are all citizens of one and the same worldwide community—to contemporary environmental ethics. According to Stoicism, the universal community consists only of rational beings, which entails that non-human entities are of no moral concern. While this might seem to rule out any consideration for the environment, Shogry shows that this is not the case: Stoics believed that humans are naturally endowed with the capacity to contemplate the order of the cosmos, and this activity contributes to happiness, the achievement of which will be thwarted if order is disrupted by environmental degradation. Stoics might therefore support preserving the natural world.

Stoic cosmopolitanism's ramifications for feminist thought are explored by Lisa Hill, who considers whether Stoics believed men and women are equally capable of becoming sages. She notes that although there is evidence that Roman Stoics' attitudes toward women were less progressive than those of their Greek predecessors, the former were nonetheless committed to the equality of all humans, which meant they rejected male chauvinism and the idea that women cannot be on equal footing with men when it comes to achieving virtue and exercising right reason.

How would Epicureans react to today's consumer culture? What treatment would they offer for our overactive desires and fixation with wealth and the acquisition of material goods? Tim O'Keefe formulates the Epicureans' diagnosis of the ailment and outlines their cure, which centers on living simply and using practical reason to understand the realities of our desires: human needs are minimal, and we shouldn't be upset about not getting what we don't need. O'Keefe considers the objection that an economy of Epicurean consumers would fall into recession, and concludes the chapter by showing that contemporary studies on happiness support the Epicureans' view that materialism is harmful to our well-being.

This *Handbook* closes with Phillip Mitsis' investigation of the influence of Hellenistic philosophy on the economic views of the Enlightenment, especially ideas concerning scarcity, labor, and utility. He argues that there are significant parallels between the economic arguments of modern thinkers, such as Locke, Smith, and Galiani, and those of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Skeptics. Economic histories standardly look to the modern period for insight into the origins of later economic thought, but Mitsis finds insight in the philosophies of the Hellenistic era, uncovering their lasting influence on the economic theories of the Enlightenment and beyond.

Notes

1 See, for instance, A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 13, 115, 210.

2 For example, the following recent popular books focus on Seneca, and/or Marcus Aurelius, and/or Epictetus: *The Daily Stoic*, by Ryan Holiday (2016); *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy*, by William Irvine (2016); *Philosophy for Life and Other Dangerous Situations: Ancient Philosophy for Modern Problems*, by Jules Evans (2013); *How to Be a Stoic: Using Ancient Philosophy to Live a Modern Life*, by Massimo Pigliucci (2017). This list could go on at length.

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PART I

Methods and Background

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1

EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY AND ITS PARTS

J. Clerk Shaw

The Epicureans hold distinctive views that sometimes sound strikingly modern. In physics, for example, they say that only atoms and void exist *per se*, that objects of different weights fall through void at the same rate, and that vision is caused by atoms flowing from visible objects into the eye. They reject Platonic definition and Stoic deduction as useless and replace these logical systems with "canonic," in which they argue that perception and feeling are infallible and that we must form and assess all our beliefs by reference to those standards alone. In ethics, they defend hedonism, insist that virtue is valuable only for the sake of pleasure, and argue that justice is merely a useful system of social conventions.

Epicurus founded this system in the third century BCE and gathered around him like-minded friends, most notably Metrodorus and Hermarchus. Several complete works by Epicurus are preserved by Diogenes Laertius, a third-century CE historian of philosophy who may have had Epicurean leanings. A Vatican manuscript preserves many sayings, and some papyrus fragments also survive. Later Epicurean writings include *On the Nature of Things*, by the first-century BCE poet Lucretius; extended papyrus remains of Lucretius' near-contemporary Philodemus, preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius; and a stone inscription in present-day Turkey that Diogenes of Oenoanda commissioned in the third century CE. We also have summaries and quotations from non-Epicureans—often hostile ones such as Cicero (first century BCE Academic skeptic), Plutarch (first–second century CE Platonist), and Sextus Empiricus (third century CE Pyrrhonist skeptic). Epicureanism did change over time and produced some internal disagreements (e.g., Cicero *De Fin.* I.29–31, 65–70), but this to a relatively small degree. Initial accounts of Epicurean philosophy can thus draw freely on all members of the tradition, across many centuries.[1]

The Epicureans conceive of philosophy as utterly practical. I start by exploring this feature of the system. Next, I turn to the parts of philosophy (canonic, physics, and ethics), what they study, and their usefulness. It seems easy to see how ethics has practical value, but harder for the other parts, especially physics. Scholars have a standard view of why the Epicureans study physics: to remove fear of the gods and fear of death. However, this account produces puzzles. The puzzles can be resolved by noting two additional benefits of physics ignored by the standard account. First, physics replaces our unstable, troubling beliefs with stable, calm beliefs. Second, physics helps to grasp ethical kinds such as pleasure, pain, and desire, and places these within a causal scheme that aids in removing trouble and achieving tranquility. Appreciating these points gives a fuller picture of how the parts of Epicurean philosophy work together to benefit us.

Epicurean Philosophy

Epicurus calls philosophy "an activity which by arguments and discussions brings about the good life" (*M* XI.169). More particularly, philosophy is therapeutic; it brings about the good life by curing the soul and making it healthy (*Ep. Men.* 122).[2] Indeed, just as the *only* point of medicine is curing the body, so the *only* point of philosophy is curing the soul (Porphyry, *To Marcella* 31). Thus, true philosophy cannot be a detached pursuit, but must be put into practice—again, just like medicine (*SV* 54). Since having a healthy soul and living well are the most important aims for everyone, Epicurus exhorts us to philosophize constantly: at every stage of life (*Ep. Men*. 122), every day and night (*Ep. Men*. 135), and along with all other activities: "one must philosophize and at the same time laugh and take care of one's household and use the rest of our personal goods, and never stop proclaiming the utterances of true philosophy" (*SV* 41). This constant practice of philosophy requires social support in the form of communal friendship—in Epicurus' generation, the Garden outside Athens. In sum, Epicurean philosophy is a way of life, not a mere intellectual pastime.[3]

The value of philosophy is purely instrumental: philosophy *produces* a healthy soul, and thereby happiness (*M* XI.169; *Ep. Men*. 122). Some doubt this because of a single passage: "in other activities, the rewards come only when people have become, with great difficulty, complete [masters of the activity]; but in philosophy the pleasure accompanies the knowledge. For the enjoyment does not come after the learning but the learning and the enjoyment are simultaneous" (*SV* 27).[4] We often say that causes precede their effects. On that view, if philosophical learning is simultaneous with enjoyment, their relationship cannot be causal. But Diogenes of Oenoanda rejects this view of causes. He rebukes those who say that virtue constitutes happiness rather than producing it (fr. 32). To that end, he distinguishes antecedent from simultaneous causes: surgery causes simultaneous pain, but brings about future pleasure by curing us. So, surgery is an antecedent cause of pleasure. Eating, by contrast, is simultaneous with the pleasure of eating, and virtue is simultaneous with the pleasures of virtue (fr. 33). On the Epicurean view, then, philosophy produces a healthy soul, which in turn produces pleasure. But there is no delay between philosophical learning, improved psychological health, and pleasure. Thus, philosophy has purely instrumental value, even though philosophical learning causes pleasure simultaneously.[5]

Epicurus gives an especially bold statement of philosophy's practical value by saying that "prudence is a more valuable thing than philosophy" (*Ep. Men*. 132). To understand this claim, we must look at its context. Epicurus has just explained that pleasure is the good, and that living pleasantly comes not from drinking and debauchery but from "sober calculation." Prudence is the origin [*archê*] of calculation, and calculation performs two tasks: it finds reasons [*aitias*] for every choice and avoidance (i.e., every decision) and it removes troubling opinions. At this point Epicurus declares prudence [*phronêsis*] the greatest good, more valuable [*timiôteron*] than philosophy. He then offers another reason for this claim: prudence is the source of other virtues, and it teaches that living prudently, honorably, and justly is both necessary and sufficient for living pleasantly.

Epicurus thus describes the value of prudence twice: i) by calculating, it produces good decisions and drives out empty opinions; ii) it produces other virtues and clarifies both their value and its own. But these are two descriptions of the same tasks. Prudence is valuable because it helps us to make good decisions. The other virtues are valuable because they are conditions of the soul free from empty, troubling opinions. For example, courage requires freedom from the troubling beliefs that death is fearful and that one must always avoid immediate pain (*De Fin*. I.49).[6] Philosophy enters the picture here, since it produces a

healthy—i.e., virtuous—soul. In other words, prudence identifies virtue as a valuable aim, and philosophy provides the tools necessary to achieve that aim. Since prudence discovers the value of virtue and philosophy is a tool to achieving virtue, prudence has greater value.

This account seems right, but it leaves behind two puzzles. First, prudence teaches us about itself: that living prudently is both necessary and sufficient for living pleasantly. If prudence is needed to grasp the value of prudence, we cannot see the point of cultivating prudence until we are already prudent. This could explain why the sage maintains her prudence, but not how anyone ever becomes prudent. Second, and relatedly, prudence as described seems to come from philosophy. As we shall see, the ethical part of philosophy studies decisions. This study is useful only if it improves our decisions. But if prudence is excellence at decision-making, and philosophy makes us excellent at decision-making, then prudence derives from philosophy, rather than being the origin or principle [*archê*] that leads us to philosophy.[7]

Both problems can be solved if prudence comes in degrees. We make many good decisions without philosophy. For example, we store food for the winter without any need for sophisticated reasoning. Our experience of acting prudently reveals its connection to pleasure. Among the lessons of prudence, then, is that prudence is necessary for living pleasantly. Thus, just as prudence identifies the health of the soul as a desirable aim, and philosophy as the tool that produces the healthy soul by removing troubling opinions, so prudence identifies its own further development as a desirable aim, and philosophy as the tool that enables it to perfect itself, by studying choice and avoidance systematically.

The Parts of Epicurean Philosophy

The Epicurean claim that philosophy must be useful has real implications for what they count as philosophy. Again, they reject formal logic as useless, and they likewise reject mathematics. For just the same reason, they scorn traditional education (*paideia*—probably including rhetoric and literary theory). Their practical conception of philosophy has teeth, then; it provides a touchstone for rejecting both standard educational practices and other conceptions of philosophy such as Platonism and Stoicism.

Ultimately, the Epicureans accept three parts of philosophy: canonic, physics, and ethics. Diogenes Laertius describes these parts twice, probably drawing on two sources (DL X.30). Briefly, canonic concerns the system's procedures, or its fundamental standards and principles of inquiry. (For example, part of canonic concerns the infallibility of perception and how we should form and assess beliefs by reference to perception.) Ethics studies the end, decisions, and lives. Physics covers the entire theory of nature, including processes of generation and corruption. Epicurus wrote works that reflect each of these topics: a single work on canonic (the *Canon*), 37 books *On Nature*, and three separate works on the end, choices and avoidances, and lives (DL X.27–28).

A small complication arises here: the Epicureans often present canonic within their works on physics, leading some in antiquity to deny that they recognize it as a separate part. However, both sources that discuss the matter say that the Epicureans recognize three parts (*M* VII.14–15, 22; DL X.30). Further, Epicurus seems to distinguish three parts at the end of his *Letter to Pythocles*. He there urges Pythocles to study "the basic principles and the unlimited and things akin to those, and further … the criteria and the feelings, and that for the sake of which we reason these things out" (116). "The basic principles and the unlimited and things akin to these" are atoms and void and physics more generally. "The criteria" are a central topic of canonic. "The feelings" are ethical criteria, so this topic links canonic and ethics. "That for the sake of which we reason these things out" is the end, a central

topic in ethics. Notably, Epicurus urges Pythocles to "study these together," implying that in practice, study of the parts of philosophy is integrated.

We have seen that the Epicureans insist on a practical and therapeutic conception of philosophy, and that this conception of philosophy actually leads them to reject certain inquiries as useless. So, we should expect that each part of philosophy will be practically and therapeutically useful. This is confirmed by Philodemus, who says that all three parts contribute to choices and avoidances (*De Elect.* XIII):

> Above all, he [Epicurus] establishes the principles of philosophy, by which alone it is possible to act rightly. And it is clear that he also establishes the congenital ends, which yield the most conspicuous evidence and by which the calculations concerning choices and avoidances are performed. Besides, one must unfailingly draw the ethical arguments regarding both choices and avoidances entirely from the study of nature in order that they should be complete—if nothing else, the principle that nothing is produced without a cause and that … does not change.[8]

As we have seen, canonic studies principles, ethics studies ends, and physics studies nature. Philodemus lists these same three parts and tells us that each contributes to choices and avoidances. (Note too that this further confirms the tripartite division of philosophy.)

It is perhaps easiest to see how ethics contributes directly to the practical aims of philosophy. For it studies the end—what we are ultimately trying to achieve in life—and how our particular decisions and general ways of living help to realize or frustrate that end. Strikingly, though, Philodemus insists that all parts of philosophy contribute to decisions. But it is obscure how the study of nature guides our actions. Why must Epicureans study physics at all, rather than limiting their inquiries to matters of obvious practical concern?

Epicurus clearly does think physics is useful. Each surviving letter on physics opens by saying that it is useful for both beginners and advanced students (*Ep. Hdt*. 35–37; *Ep. Pyth*. 84–85), and each closes with the same claim (*Ep. Hdt*. 83; *Ep. Pyth*. 116–117). As he advocates constant philosophical activity, so too Epicurus recommends constant activity in physics (*Ep. Hdt*. 36, 37). Physics, he claims, makes us calm, blessed, tranquil, and untroubled (*Ep. Hdt*. 37, 78; *Ep. Pyth*. 84, 85, 87). Scholars often say that physics promotes this end in two ways: it helps to remove fear of the gods and fear of death. Call this the "two-aims" view.[9] I start by sketching these two aims and how physics helps to achieve them. As we shall see, it is doubtful that these are the only two reasons why the Epicureans study physics.

One of our main sources of trouble is fear of the gods. This fear involves thinking of the gods as feeling gratitude and anger and so as wanting to reward or punish those who please or pain them. It also involves thinking of them as active in the world—for example, as causing eclipses, lightning, and so on. Such events are readily seen as results of divine favor or disfavor; when an earthquake destroys a house, its owners may wonder how they angered the gods. Epicurean philosophy removes fear of the gods in two ways. First, it draws on our basic concept of the gods as blessed and immortal to argue that the gods feel no anger or gratitude, and more generally never have reason to act in the world. Second, much of Epicurean physics explains natural phenomena without reference to divine action. Thus, the study of physics contributes to removing superstitious fear of the gods.

Another major source of trouble is fear of death.[10] Epicureans aim to remove fear of death through two sorts of arguments as well. First, they argue that the soul is mortal and that death is the end for us. On its own, this addresses one sort of fear of death connected to fear of the gods: fear of post-mortem punishment. Second, since death is the end for us,

they argue that death is not fearful—whoever does not exist cannot be harmed. The former arguments seem physical, and the latter ethical. Other physical arguments also help to remove fear of death; for example, to believe firmly that we do not survive death, we must explain how we dream of the dead, though they do not exist (*DRN* IV.26–41, 722–748).

The Epicureans certainly study physics for those two reasons, but it is unlikely that they are the only two reasons. One problem for the two-aims view is the sheer amount of physics the Epicureans do. Epicurus wrote 37 books *On Nature*. Lucretius' poem is almost entirely on physics, with occasional allusions to or comments on other parts of philosophy. It is unclear how believing that objects of different weights fall through a void at the same speed—or, to take another example, that magnetism is explicable as a function of atomic collisions (*DRN* VI.906–1089)—helps to remove our fear of the gods or of death. Another problem for the two-aims view lies in Epicurus' intense devotion to the study of nature. He says not only that physics is useful; but even that "with this sort of activity more than any other I bring calm to my life" (*Ep. Hdt*. 37). Finally, the two-aims view makes it mysterious why the Epicureans want or need true theories. Removing fear of the gods and death only seems to require believing accounts of the world on which the gods are inactive and death destroys us. It is unclear why these accounts must also be accurate ones.[11]

At the same time, Epicurus does place some limits on physical inquiry. The *Letter to Pythocles* concerns special topics in physics—those in which multiple explanations for the phenomena are empirically adequate.[12] There are not multiple adequate accounts in ethics or many physical topics, such as the division of reality into body and void or the claim that the elements of body are atoms (86). Where there are multiple accounts, achieving calm does not require narrowing these down, and striving to identify a unique cause itself causes trouble (*Ep. Hdt*. 79–80, *Ep. Pyth*. 85–87). Likewise, ability to predict meteorological phenomena fails to make us happy, and having such an ability without knowledge of the heavenly bodies—especially that they are not gods—itself causes trouble (*Ep. Hdt*. 79). Even as we try to explain why the Epicureans study physics so much and with such fervor, we must also explain why they place these limits on the study of physics, but not others.[13]

Physics and Stable Belief

Epicurus offers a third aim for physics in the *Letter to Herodotus*. Late in that letter, he sketches topics discussed more fully in the *Letter to Pythocles*: meteorological phenomena, multiple explanations, and how such knowledge bears on blessedness (76–80). During this discussion, he says that we must avoid opinions inconsistent with the concept of the gods, or else "the inconsistency itself [*autê hê hupenantiotês*] will produce the greatest disturbance in our souls" (77). Of course, falsely thinking that the gods are irascible and interventionist may lead us to fear an earthquake at their hands (for example). However, the concern here is not with downstream effects of false beliefs about the gods, but with the immediate conflict between false beliefs and the basic concept of the gods as blessed and immortal. That conflict all by itself causes psychological disturbance; removing such conflict and disturbance is thus another crucial aim of physics.

This is confirmed immediately, when Epicurus lists four sources of trouble (81–82). The first two are i) assigning inconsistent attributes to the gods (blessedness but also desire and action), especially as this stems from believing that the heavenly bodies are gods, and ii) expectation of eternal terror, of the sort described in myths. One might read this as saying that false beliefs about the gods make us fear their anger and seek their gratitude i) during life and ii) in the afterlife. But in fact, Epicurus distinguishes i) trouble caused directly by a conflict among attitudes from ii) trouble caused downstream by the

false beliefs involved in that conflict.[14] Physics removes trouble of both sorts. It shows that the gods do not care about us and our actions, and so removes the resulting fear of what they may do to us, and the desire to seek their favor and avoid their anger. But physics also removes conflicts among our attitudes that trouble us directly, leaving us with firm opinions. Hence, Epicurus claims that physics aims at "peace of mind and firm conviction [*pistin bebaion*]" (*Ep. Pyth*. 85).

This point is also confirmed in Cicero, *On Ends*. Torquatus there lists five aims of physics, explores the first at length, and concludes with another list of the same five aims.[15] The fourth aim is ensuring that "we are not thrown into confusion by ignorance and by the chilling fear that often results from ignorance alone [*ipsa*]" (I.63). When Torquatus returns to the fourth aim, he says physics "provides peace of mind, by lifting the veil of ignorance from the secrets of the universe" (I.64). This could mean (for example) that someone who does not understand the causes of earthquakes fears them, not because they think the gods cause them, but because they cannot identify any cause at all.[16] On this reading, ignorance is mere lack of an explanation, and the trouble it causes is just fear of inexplicable external phenomena. Comparison with the *Letter to Herodotus* suggests a different view: ignorance is internal conflict, and this conflict causes trouble *directly*, as distinct from trouble due to the fears that can *result from* false beliefs.

This reading may seem to give inquiry and removal of ignorance final value, which would conflict with the claim that philosophy and its parts have purely instrumental value. However, it does not. Epicurus distinguishes troubles caused directly and immediately by a joint conflict among attitudes from troubles caused indirectly by the false beliefs involved in that conflict, in a way mediated by other attitudes and experiences. Admitting direct, immediate harms of ignorance does not entail that knowledge is good for its own sake. In both cases, ignorance harms us by causing pain—in the first case directly, and in the second case indirectly. Torquatus makes the same distinction for other vices (*De Fin*. I.44, 50, 58). Vice harms us directly—it causes immediate pain, simply by its presence in the soul. But vice also harms us indirectly—it causes pain in a way mediated by other experiences and attitudes, e.g., fear of punishment for unjust acts.[17] These are two ways that vice *causes* pain, so the direct harms of vice are not *constituted* by vice itself. Likewise, ignorance causes pain both directly and indirectly, but both sorts of pain are *results* of ignorance.

This reason for studying physics explains both why the Epicureans study so much physics and why they deem physical inquiry and contemplation so valuable. It also coheres with the claim that we should not pursue literary theory, for example. We need not form any opinions about literary theory, so any trouble that might arise from inconsistent beliefs about literature can be removed by not holding opinions. In contrast, we cannot suspend judgment about how the natural world works. Thus, removing inconsistent beliefs that cause trouble requires that we study nature. This account also explains why the Epicureans care about the truth. They say that the very concept of truth derives from the truth of the senses (*DRN* IV.476–479). In keeping with this concept of truth, beliefs are true just in case they are consistent with the totality of relevant observation—just in case they are empirically adequate (*M* VII.211–216). One can reject this account of truth, of course, but it does explain why the Epicureans want true theories. If inconsistencies in the soul cause trouble immediately, and if false theories are inconsistent with sense-perception, then true theories are strictly necessary to satisfy the aim of removing trouble and providing firm opinions.

Moreover, this account explains why Epicurean limits on the study of physics are not just consistent with, but even required by, their concern for truth. Among empirically-adequate theories of a given phenomenon, all count as true on the Epicurean criterion; so, one should accept all such theories as true (somewhere in the cosmos, and possibly here). Further, the

phenomena that admit of multiple empirically-adequate theories are precisely those that, without modern scientific instruments, cannot be given a more exact account. So, we should not be surprised to find the Epicureans thinking that the attempt to rule out some empirically-adequate accounts both manifests and causes psychological disturbance: no available evidence will actually narrow down the possibilities. Anyone who favors one empirically-adequate theory over another will be troubled, since they cannot stably and consistently favor that theory over others on the basis of evidence.

Importantly, the aim of stable belief is not completely isolated from the purposes of physics countenanced by the two-aims view. The idea of removing inconsistency and its associated troubles first surfaced in relation to our beliefs and basic concepts of the gods. The trouble caused by instability in these beliefs is not reducible to that involved in fearing the gods, but it is related. Further, physics explains natural phenomena without appeal to divine action; this is needed at least in part to stabilize the belief that the gods are inactive. Likewise, in relation to fear of death: physics explains our dreams of the dead in a way consistent with our mortality, and this is necessary for stable belief that the soul is mortal and death is the end for us. Still, the sheer range of Epicurean physics requires that we understand stable belief as a wider aim. That is, the Epicureans clearly do not only seek stable belief on those topics that are practically important according to the two-aims view.

Physical Study of Ethical Topics

Epicurus states another aim of physics in *Principal Doctrine* 11: "If our suspicions about heavenly phenomena and about death did not trouble us, and moreover, if not knowing the limits of pains and desires did not trouble us, we would have no need of natural science [*physiologias*]." He opens with those topics recognized by the two-aims view: suspicions about heavenly phenomena presumably concern their origin in divine agency. However, he also says that physics is needed to study the limits of pains and desires. These sound like ethical topics thrown onto a list of reasons for studying physics. But that raises puzzles: why must physics study the same topics as ethics? What does physical inquiry into them achieve that ethical inquiry does not?[18]

There would be no problem if physics [*to physikon, peri physeôs*] were different from natural science [*physiologia*]. Perhaps natural science comprises both physics and ethics. After all, Epicurean ethics often talks about nature—e.g., when it discusses "natural desire." On the other hand, Diogenes Laertius calls physics "the entire [*pasan*] theory of nature" (X.30). And there are other strong reasons to identify natural science and physics. Epicurus calls the *Letter to Herodotus* both a work in physics (*peri physeôs*, 35; *huper physeôs*, 82–83) and a work in natural science or *physiologia* (37, 78). One might say that *physiologia* in these passages is philosophy, the larger unity containing physics as a part, but this is not the natural reading. The *Letter to Pythocles* contains still more decisive evidence. Epicurus discusses the usefulness of his letter not only to Pythocles (an advanced student) but also to "those recently acquainted with knowledge of natural science [*physiologias*]." He then urges his readers to study that letter along with "the remainder [*tôn loipôn*]" sketched in the *Letter to Herodotus* (85). If the *Letter to Herodotus* covers "the remainder" of natural science, then natural science must be identical to physics, not philosophy as a whole. Both letters describe how physics helps us live well, but neither addresses ethical topics as such.[19]

Principal Doctrine 11 is not the only evidence that physics studies ethical topics. An early Epicurean text links physics with character development:

> natural science [*physiologia*] does not create boastful men nor chatterboxes nor men who show off the culture [*paideia*] which the many quarrel over, but rather strong and self-sufficient men, who pride themselves on their own personal goods, not those of external circumstances.
>
> (*SV* 45)

This sounds different from *KD* 11, which says that physics teaches the limits of pain and desire. But these two points are united in Cicero, *On Ends*. According to Torquatus, the fifth use of physics is that "we will have a better character once we have learned what nature requires"; in particular, physics offers "self-control, by explaining the nature and varieties of desire" (I.63–64). Torquatus says physics offers self-control or temperance [*moderatio*], while *SV* 45 says it makes one strong and self-sufficient [*sobarous kai autarkeis*]. But self-sufficiency is connected to temperance, for example in the *Letter to Menoeceus* (130–131; Gk. *sôphrosunê* = Lt. *moderatio)*. *SV* 45 and *De Fin* I.63–64 thus make the same point about how physics builds character.[20] Cicero (but not *SV* 45) says how physics does so: by teaching the limits and kinds of desires, as *KD* 11 says it does. Clearly, then, physics does in fact study ethical topics like the limits of pain and desire. But what is involved in a distinct physical inquiry into these topics, over and above the ethical one—and why is such an inquiry useful?

One possibility is that physics plays the same role in relation to pleasure, pain, and desire that it does in relation to the gods and death: it stabilizes our beliefs on these topics. This seems right so far as it goes, and we may see traces of such a goal in Epicurean texts. Most notably, Lucretius discusses pleasure, pain, and desire from a physical perspective; his accounts are scattered but fairly extensive. For example, he gives physiological accounts of pleasure and pain. When our sense organs touch jagged atoms, we feel pain; when they touch smooth atoms, we feel pleasure (II.398–441; IV.615–672). When the living aggregate is disrupted, we feel pain; when it is restored, we feel pleasure (II.963–972; IV.858–876). Book IV gives an account of sexual desire and pleasure that is connected both to wider discussions of vital activities and to ethical claims about sex. Book III argues in a physical mode that death is the limit of severe pain (III.241–257, 469–473; cf. *KD* 4).

Lucretius does not derive ethical conclusions from these physical studies. Rather, this material shows that independent results of physical and ethical inquiry do not conflict. As we have seen, internal psychological conflict and instability is a major source of trouble for us, both in general and in relation to ethical topics. Unless our best ethical theories cohere with our best physical theories of ethically-relevant phenomena, we may worry that future physics could undermine presuppositions of our ethical views. Physical inquiry into the kinds and limits of pleasure, pain, and desire thus stabilizes our ethical beliefs and so calms the soul.

However, this is not the whole story. Part of the passage from Philodemus quoted above suggests another way in which physics bears on ethics:

> Besides, one must unfailingly draw the ethical arguments regarding both choices and avoidances entirely from the study of nature in order that they should be complete [*enteleis*]—if nothing else, the principle that nothing is produced without a cause and that … does not change.

This passage raises questions. What does it mean to say that physics completes ethical arguments about choice and avoidance? We might try to assimilate this to the point just made: perhaps physics merely stabilizes our beliefs on ethical topics. However, the last part

of the passage suggests that the basic conservation principles aid in decision-making. Conservation principles are not an intrinsically ethical topic, as pain and desire are. So, we must seek another way in which physics completes ethical arguments about choice and avoidance—and in particular, how grasping the conservation principles might do so.

Here we can draw on the analogy between philosophy and medicine: medicine treats the body and is useful only for that purpose; philosophy treats the soul and is useful only for that purpose. But while doctors are not natural scientists, they may need natural science to identify symptoms, diagnose conditions, and plan treatments. Medicine needs natural science and physiology, though it is not reducible to these. Likewise, in doing every part of philosophy—ethics included—the philosopher relies on natural science.

More particularly, I suggest that conservation principles are relevant to choice and avoidance because they entail that trouble in the soul has a cause. Since each psychological ailment has a cause, each can be cured by removing its cause. This suspicion is confirmed by the fact that Philodemus, in the very same work on choices and avoidances, gives several classifications of causes; for example, he distinguishes internal and external causes (*De Elect*. VI). The diagnostic and therapeutic significance of this distinction is shown by Lucretius' case of a man who fails to understand that the cause of his trouble is internal, not external (III.1053–1075). Under the misapprehension that his surroundings bother him, he travels restlessly between city and country. The real cause, though, is his fear of death; if he knew that, he would instead devote himself to studying the nature of things—i.e., to physics. So, knowledge of causes, and particularly the distinction between internal and external causes, can alter our choices and avoidances: it can lead us to abandon travel for philosophy.[21]

This hypothesis also helps to explain the claims in *SV* 45 and *De Fin*. I.63–64 that the study of nature improves character. Character is primarily a matter of one's evaluative beliefs, and such beliefs are among the main causes of living well or badly. Physics is thus relevant to living well in part because it draws distinctions among causes and enables us to alter those causes—among them, our evaluative beliefs. So, physics contributes to character development, making us moderate and self-sufficient.[22]

More speculatively, the ethical importance of grasping causes may also be seen in *Letter to Herodotus* 82, the list of sources of trouble we encountered in the previous section. As we saw there, Epicurus lists i) conflicting beliefs about the gods; ii) fear of eternal terror; and iii) fear of lack of perception in death. He then mentions a fourth cause: some suffer

> not as a result of their opinions but because of some irrational condition [*alogôi ... tini parastasei*]; hence, not setting a limit on dread, they suffer a disturbance equal to or even greater than what they would suffer if they actually held these opinions.

One could insist that the "irrational condition" is simply iii) above—i.e., fear of lack of perception. Lack of perception is not fearful, as we can see by thinking of a dreamless sleep (*DRN* III.919–927). So, believing that death is impercipience cannot cause fear of such a state. Therefore, the cause must be an irrational condition. However, it seems odd to single out a particular belief as the cause of trouble only to immediately insist that the belief is not the real cause, especially if this is not stated explicitly. Further, fear of impercipience can still be analyzed as the effect of false beliefs, as in Lucretius' rebuke to someone who fears lost opportunities (III.931–963). So, this "irrational condition" must be a distinct source of trouble.

Someone suffering from an irrational condition cannot be calmed by what philosophy teaches about the limits of pain and desire or the nature of death; such teachings can alter beliefs and the effects of beliefs, but cannot treat conditions that are not caused by beliefs.

However, such trouble could perhaps be cured by identifying its non-doxastic cause. For example, perhaps we do not *believe* that we will feel pain after death, but we nonetheless regularly *imagine* that we will. In such a case, attending to our beliefs will be useless, since they are already in order. Instead, physics might teach us to deal with such non-doxastic causes of trouble by entertaining competing, untroubling images of our own death, so that we no longer imagine things contrary to our own beliefs.

Conclusion

The Epicureans consider philosophy a purely practical pursuit, one whose sole aim is to make us live well by guiding our actions and removing trouble from our souls. Accomplishing these goals means philosophizing throughout life and even constantly each day, so that philosophy comes to be our entire way of life. This way of life is divided into three parts or topics: canonic, physics, and ethics. Unsurprisingly, each part of philosophy has its place in accomplishing the practical aims of philosophy as a whole. It is tempting, though, to suppose that a fully practical conception of philosophy would give ethics pride of place, and relegate other parts of philosophy to supporting roles. Physics, in particular, might be thought to explore the nature of soul and death and the operations of the world solely to support more properly ethical arguments against fearing the gods and death.

However, this paints too narrow a picture of the role of physics in Epicurean philosophy. Most importantly, physics removes ignorance from the soul that troubles us by its mere presence, replacing this ignorance with firm opinions that make us calm. Indeed, much of physics seems aimed at stabilizing our beliefs about the gods, death, pleasure, pain, and desire. Beyond this, though, philosophy brings calm by providing stable beliefs about how the world works in general—a topic on which we cannot suspend judgment, as we can concerning the correct analysis of poetry or the way to organize a persuasive speech. Philosophy also needs physics much as medicine does: for its therapies to work, it must grasp the causes of the illnesses it treats. So, physics makes us happy in more diverse ways than are usually recognized. This explains the sheer amount of physics that the Epicureans do, the great value they see in it, and their need for true accounts.

This chapter will not be the last word on its topic, in part because the nature, aims, and structure of Epicurean philosophy have rarely been treated explicitly and at length. Points that need more detailed treatment include: how all parts of philosophy are relevant to choice and avoidance (as Philodemus says); how classification of causes bears on therapy (including, but not limited to, the distinction between internal and external causes of trouble); and how inner conflict troubles us, both in the case of ignorance and in the case of other vices. I hope the present chapter prepares the way for more detailed work on all of these topics and more.[23]

Notes

1 If Epicurus does not state a view, but Lucretius or Philodemus does, that does not imply a development; our sources for Epicurus' own views are limited, and such arguments from silence are anyway limited.
2 Importantly, the Epicureans argue that the soul is both material and mortal. For more on this, see Robitzsch's chapter, "Epicureans on What There Is."
3 On ancient philosophy as a way of life, see Hadot 1995. However, Hadot sometimes transfers lessons about Stoicism and other schools to Epicureanism, where they may not apply.
4 LS 156 say that an interpretation of Epicurean philosophy as purely instrumental "cannot survive a reading" of this passage.

5 Cicero complains that an Epicurean cannot say that virtuous activity is immediately pleasant (I.25), as his Epicurean spokesman Torquatus later agrees. This does not conflict with Diogenes' claim, which is that *virtue*, not virtuous activity, is a simultaneous cause of pleasure. I cannot explore the issue further here.
6 Epicurus does not list courage, but "living honorably" includes every virtue; cf. Philodemus, *De Elect*. XIV.
7 Hessler 2014: 286–289 suggests that "philosophy" here is useless, non-Epicurean theoretical philosophy. However, the passage suggests that philosophy is valuable, though prudence is even (*kai*) more valuable.
8 This text requires some restoration and cuts off here—because, as mentioned in the introduction, our texts of Philodemus were preserved in a library buried in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.
9 See below, n.18, for scholars who seem to endorse the two-aims view in their readings of *KD* 11.
10 For more on this topic, see Austin's chapter, "Epicurus on Sense-Experience and the Fear of Death."
11 Nussbaum 1994 presses this worry.
12 Early on he describes the letter as concerned with "things in the sky", including weather and celestial phenomena. However, the scope is wider, including earthquakes and related geological phenomena.
13 These limitations are sometimes thought to evince a lack of genuine interest in physical inquiry—but again, the evidence strongly suggests wide and deep interest in these and other parts of physics.
14 He focuses on fears about the afterlife as he moves towards the third source of trouble: fear of the loss of feeling in death. That does not entail that the first source involves fear about how the gods may act on us during life. See below on the fourth source of trouble on this list (and its relationship to the third).
15 One complication is that the first aim, which Torquatus discusses at length, concerns canonic and the achievement of stable beliefs. That may make trouble for the distinction between canonic and physics, and certainly makes trouble for the distinction between Torquatus' first and fourth aims of physics. The issue requires a fuller reckoning than is possible here.
16 Cf. Warren 2009: 235, though he does not cite Cicero. Warren also mentions uncertainty about the future, but Epicurean physics provides no predictive power concerning earthquakes, and in any case, Epicurus says that predictive power alone is useless or worse (*Ep. Hdt*. 79).
17 This feature of the Epicurean view of vice has been neglected, but again I cannot discuss the details here.
18 *KD* 11 is cited in the existing literature when discussing the aims of physics, but the last clause is often ignored; see, e.g., Nussbaum 1994: 124; Smith 2001: xxiii; Warren 2002: 179–80; O'Keefe 2010: 133.
19 Earlier, I sometimes assumed without comment that physics and natural science were the same; I hope the paragraph above vindicates that assumption.
20 So too Epicurus: physics makes one "incomparably stronger" (*asumblêton ... hadrotêta lêpsesthai; Ep. Hdt*. 83).
21 Some causes of trouble are external, though; for discussion in the case of fear of death, see Austin 2012.
22 Nussbaum 1994 raises worries about giving reason and argument purely instrumental value; it seems that the Epicureans would gladly take a pill to remove trouble if it did so just as well—perhaps by instilling the relevant beliefs causally rather than through reasoning. But this is at least not a unique view; Socrates in the *Euthydemus* declares himself willing to be destroyed and replaced with a wise duplicate (285a-c).
23 For feedback on earlier versions of this material, I owe thanks to Kelly Arenson, Emily Austin, Max Robitzsch, and audiences at an APA group session of the Hellenistic Philosophy Society, the SAGP, Transylvania University (especially David Kaufman), and the UCSD History of Philosophy Roundtable (especially Monte Johnson).

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2

THE STOICS AND THEIR PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

William O. Stephens

The Stoa

Unlike the Epicureans, the philosophy of the Stoics neither originated from, nor rigidly adhered to, a fixed set of pronouncements by one authoritative thinker. Whereas Epicureans followed Epicurus, Stoics are named after an architectural structure. A stoa is a portico or porch. At the *Stoa Poikilē* ("Painted Stoa") in the marketplace of ancient Athens, beginning around 300 BCE, a group of men gathered to philosophize about the world, its nature and causes, the divine, language, meaning, and the goal of life. These "members of the Stoa" devised a powerful system that would endure and evolve for centuries. Thus, since its inception, Stoicism was never the intellectual property of any one philosopher—no matter how brilliant—who called himself a Stoic. The Roman Stoic Seneca explains: "Will I not walk in the footsteps of my predecessors? I will indeed use the ancient road—but if I find another route that is more direct and has fewer ups and downs, I will stake out that one. Those who advanced these doctrines before us are not our masters but our guides. The truth lies open to all; it has not yet been taken over. Much is left also for those yet to come" (*Ep.* 33.11; Graver and Long 2015: 112). Consequently, Stoicism is better understood as a living, organic body of interrelated ideas located in conceptual space. Stoics have always interpreted, built upon, debated, and modified their ideas. Stoics today continue to discuss which doctrines to embrace and which to reject. I contend that within the expanse of the history of philosophy there is a distinct Stoic perspective demarcated by an identifiable territory of cohesive concepts. So, who were these Stoics?

Zeno of Citium (334–262 BCE)[1]

Born in the town of Citium (modern day Larnaca) on the island of Cyprus, Zeno was the founder and first scholarch (head) of the Stoa. He was nicknamed "the Phoenician." One report has it that his father, a merchant, brought back from his frequent trips to Athens many books about Socrates, kindling his young son's love of philosophy. A more dramatic account has it that at the age of thirty Zeno was shipwrecked on a voyage from Phoenicia and lost all his cargo. Arriving bedraggled in Athens, Zeno entered a bookseller's shop, read about Socrates, and asked where he could find such a man. The bookseller directed him to the Cynic Crates. In any case, Crates became Zeno's first teacher. Crates' emphases

on living according to nature, virtue, austerity, and disdain of conventional values like wealth and reputation appealed to Zeno. He also studied with Xenocrates of Chalcedon, head of the Platonic Academy from 339 to his death in 314 BCE, and his successor, Polemo of Athens. Zeno also learned from two Megarian philosophers: Stilpo, who taught the self-sufficiency of the wise, and the great logician Diodorus Cronus.

Zeno was said to have shown the utmost endurance against heat, cold, rain, and pain. He practiced great frugality, wore a thin cloak, and ate raw food, often simple bread and figs. In temperance, dignity, and happiness he surpassed everyone. Zeno was perhaps the first to divide philosophical discourse into logic, physics, and ethics. He may also have been the first to introduce the word *kathēkon* ("appropriate action"), writing one of his 27 recorded treatises on this subject. Zeno declared that nothing is more unbecoming than arrogance, especially in the young, who ought to behave with perfect propriety in walk, gait, and attire. He taught Persaeus of Citium, Dionysius of Heraclea, Sphaerus of Bosporus, Philonides of Thebes, Callippus of Corinth, Posidonius of Alexandria, Herillus of Carthage, and Athenodorus of Soli. His most notable pupils were Aristo of Chios and Cleanthes. The Athenians honored Zeno with the keys to the city walls, a golden crown, and a bronze statue. They buried him in the Ceramicus.

Cleanthes of Assos (331–232 BCE)

When Zeno died in 262 his student Cleanthes became the Stoa's second scholarch. The story told is that Cleanthes, a boxer from Assos (modern day Behramkale) in northwest Asia Minor, came to Athens with a pittance of four drachmas, which was perhaps very roughly equivalent to four days' pay for a skilled worker or a hoplite soldier. Too poor to buy paper, Cleanthes wrote down Zeno's lectures on oyster-shells and the blade-bones of oxen. He endured extreme poverty doing manual labor. He became famous for his hard work. By day he was said to study arguments. By night he hoisted water from wells in gardens. Asked in court to explain how so burly a man made a living, Cleanthes produced as witnesses the gardener he drew water for and the woman who employed him to crush grain into meal. For his toils and brawn he was called a second Heracles. A long fragment of Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* survives. It allegorizes the active principle of Stoic physics, praising Zeus as the giver of every gift and the sovereign ruler of the heavens, the earth, and all its creatures. Those obedient to God's universal law, Cleanthes writes, can obtain the true wealth of a noble life. The wicked unwittingly chase the evils of fame, gain, folly, or carnal pleasures. Emphasis on the one *logos*, the cosmic harmony of good and evil, and the fiery thunderbolt reflect Heraclitus' influence. Titles of 50 other writings are attributed to Cleanthes, including four books interpreting Heraclitus. Other works address virtues, education, beauty, freedom, gratitude, friendship, love, time, and logic. Sphaerus of Bosporus and Chrysippus were his pupils.

Aristo of Chios (c. 320–c. 240 BCE)

Aristo (Ariston) the Bald was from the island of Chios in the eastern Aegean Sea. He attended the lectures of Polemo and was a student of Zeno. Chrysippus would later establish a Stoic orthodoxy, including the doctrine that virtue is the only good, vice is the only bad, and all other things are classed "indifferent" since, by themselves, they bring neither happiness nor misery. The orthodox doctrine distinguished "preferred indifferents," e.g. life, health, wealth, and good reputation, from "dispreferred indifferents," e.g. death, illness, poverty, and ill repute. The former can be selected, and the latter avoided, so long as virtue

is always preserved. But Aristo argued that the goal of action is a life of complete indifference to everything that is neither virtue nor vice. Thus, he recognized no distinctions among indifferents. To defend this view, he adduced the alphabet. In writing names, sometimes we place some letters first and at other times others, suiting them to the different circumstances (as D is first when writing Dion, I when writing Ion, O when writing Orion). Some letters are preferred over others not by nature, but because the situation requires it. Similarly, in the things between virtue and vice there is no natural preference of some over others, but rather a preference according to circumstances (Ioppolo 2012: 211–12). Aristo compared the wise man to a good actor who, when cast to act the role of a (brutish) Thersites or a (kingly) Agamemnon, plays either role with equal skill.

Even more at odds with Zeno and Cleanthes, Aristo rejected logic and physics entirely, contending that physics was beyond us and logic did not concern us. Dialectical arguments he likened to spiders' webs—their workmanship impresses, but they remain useless. For Aristo, ethics was the only legitimate subject of philosophy. He challenged Zeno's belief in a plurality of virtues, affirming instead their unity. Aristo held that the wise man holds no opinions. Practical rules of advice he dismissed as useless to those lacking wisdom. He defended the virtuous person's infallible discernment of what to do in each case. Called "the Siren" for his great eloquence, Aristo taught his independent-minded, uncompromising doctrines to large audiences in the Cynosarges gymnasium, a location associated with the Cynics. Among his many students were Apollophanes, Miltiades, Diphilus, and the scientist Eratosthenes. Aristo often debated the Sceptic Arcesilaus, the head of the Academy.

Chrysippus of Soli (c. 280–c. 205 BCE)

Born in the town of Soli in Cilicia, on the southern coast of Asia Minor, Chrysippus was a physically unimposing long-distance runner. He studied with Cleanthes and, on his death, became the Stoa's third scholarch. The famous quotation: "Had there been no Chrysippus, there would have been no Stoa" (DL 7.183) is hardly an exaggeration. Some regard Chrysippus as the most important of all Stoic philosophers (Sellars 2006: 7). He assimilated the doctrines of his predecessors, crafted an arsenal of original arguments to support them, and constructed a sophisticated, unified philosophical system that would establish Stoic orthodoxy. More than 705 books are credited to him. An extensive catalogue of the titles lists dozens on logic. Chrysippus' prodigious writings survive only as fragments preserved by non-Stoic authors. His brilliance in dialectic was said to be dear to the gods (DL 7.180), so it is no surprise that he was called arrogant.

Zeno of Tarsus succeeded Chrysippus as the fourth head of the Stoa. After Zeno, Diogenes of Babylon (c. 230–c. 145 BCE) became the fifth scholarch. His pupils included Apollodorus Ephillus (of Seleucia), Boethus of Sidon, and Antipater of Tarsus, who succeeded Diogenes as head of the Stoa. Antipater's most important student was Panaetius.

Panaetius of Rhodes (c. 185–109 BCE)

Born of a noble Rhodian family, Panaetius studied at Pergamum with the Stoic philosopher and grammarian Crates of Mallus, head of the city's famous library, before moving to Athens. There he attended the lectures of all three of the Athenian philosophers sent as ambassadors to Rome in 155 BCE—the Peripatetic Critolaus of Phaselis, the Academic Sceptic Carneades of Cyrene, and the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon. At some point Panaetius was made a priest of Poseidon Hippios (god of horses) at Lindus on the southeastern coast of Rhodes (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1104). Panaetius' philosophy was shaped

predominantly by Stoic ideas, but also by Plato and Aristotle. When Panaetius moved to Rome his eclectic Stoic doctrines made quite an impact. He joined the associates of the great Roman general Scipio Africanus and attracted as pupils distinguished Romans like Quintus Aelius Tubero the Stoic and Quintus Mucius Scaevola Augur, Cicero's mentor and teacher, as well as Hecato and Posidonius. Scholars believe that Cicero (106–43 BCE) drew heavily on Panaetius' lost work *On Appropriate Actions* in writing his own very influential *On Duties* (*De Officiis*).

Unlike earlier Stoics, Panaetius doubted the efficacy of astrology and divination, but like them he affirmed divine providence. He denied Chrysippus' doctrine of the cyclical destruction of the universe by fire known as the conflagration (*ekpurōsis*), instead asserting (with Aristotle) its eternity. In ethics Panaetius departed from Stoic orthodoxy on the doctrine that virtue by itself is sufficient for happiness, again agreeing with Aristotle that material goods are also needed. But Panaetius defended Stoic orthodoxy in affirming the soul's mortality, contrary to Plato (Sellars 2006: 9). Panaetius emphasized the challenges of ordinary people rather than the perfections of the Stoic sage as the early Stoics had. This shift was followed by the Roman Stoics. In 128 BCE Panaetius succeeded Antipater as head of the Stoa. Mnesarchus and Dardanus became its co-heads after Panaetius.

Posidonius (c. 135–c. 51 BCE)

Nicknamed "the Athlete," Posidonius was born in Apamea, Syria. When his teacher Panaetius died in 109 BCE, Posidonius left Athens for the isle of Rhodes, where he became a politically active citizen. He served as an ambassador to Rome in 87–86 BCE. Though Rhodes was his home base for teaching philosophy, he traveled widely around the Mediterranean. On trips to Spain, Gaul, Liguria, Italy, Sicily, Dalmatia, Greece, and North Africa he researched other cultures and amassed copious scientific information. As a result, he became quite a polymath. His scholarly repute attracted many to his school. His numerous writings spanned philosophy, literature, history, anthropology, geography, geology, hydrology, biology, meteorology, astronomy, astrology, and mathematics. Like Panaetius, Posidonius admired the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Some scholars believe that he accepted Plato's division of the soul into reason, emotion, and desire. This tripartite psychology conflicted with Chrysippus' monistic psychology. Yet some doctrinal disagreement with Chrysippus does not mean Posidonius was not a Stoic. His student Athenodorus Cananites taught Octavian (Augustus). Both Posidonius and the logician Diodotus taught Stoicism to Cicero.

Our knowledge of the views of the Stoics of the first three centuries BCE derives only from fragments quoted by authors often keen to distort or criticize them. However, the first two centuries CE yield abundant texts written by actual Stoic authors or their students. These men are often called the "Roman" or "imperial" Stoics. The most important are Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

Seneca (c. 4 BCE–65 CE)

The philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca, called "the Younger" to distinguish him from his father, was born into a wealthy family in Corduba in southern Spain. The second of three brothers, his father was a knight [*eques*] who wrote and taught rhetoric in Rome. Equestrians were the class of aristocracy ranked second only to senators. From childhood the son was raised in Rome and taught literature, grammar, and rhetoric. Seneca studied philosophy with Attalus the Stoic and Sotion the Pythagorean. Throughout his life Seneca suffered

from asthma and poor health, including possibly tuberculosis. His brilliance in oratory so offended the megalomania of the Emperor Caligula that only the assurance that the sickly Seneca would soon die saved his life. In 41 he was accused of adultery with the Emperor Claudius' niece and exiled to Corsica. A few weeks earlier his only son had died. Recalled to Rome in 49, Seneca became praetor in 50, married the younger, wealthy Pompeia Paulina, and was made tutor to the future Emperor Nero. The powerful friends Seneca made included Sextus Afranius Burrus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard. In 54 Claudius was murdered. As advisers to Nero from 54 to 62, Seneca and Burrus wielded great clout. By making high interest loans throughout Italy and the provinces, Seneca amassed vast personal wealth and properties. When Burrus died in 62, Seneca retired from public life. In 65 his enemies accused him of complicity in Calpurnius Piso's plot to kill Nero. Though his guilt is doubtful, Nero ordered Seneca to kill himself. Tacitus reports that Seneca met his death calmly, despite the process being painful, difficult, and protracted.

Seneca's works, all in Latin, are by far both the most diverse in genre and easily double the size of the extant writings derived from the other Roman Stoics combined. He wrote nine tragedies, a satire on the apotheosis of the Emperor Claudius, and a kind of scientific treatise, *Natural Questions* (in seven books). His nine shorter essays treat assorted ethical topics. Each of three other essays consoles a loved one who had suffered a loss. *On Mercy* (in three books) gives advice to Seneca's mentee the young Emperor Nero. The seven books of *De Beneficiis* detail how to give and receive favors. Seneca also composed 124 letters of varying length, addressed to a friend named Lucilius. These letters conduct an interpersonal philosophical exchange centering on the moral improvement of both the addressee and the author. Seneca's writings shaped the reception of Stoicism in Europe for centuries. The Latin Church Fathers, medieval readers, and Renaissance humanists regarded him as a pagan whose philosophy harmonized with Christianity. The content and style of Senecan prose was a model for essays, sermons, and moralizing literature in the sixteenth through eighteenth century.

Cornutus (flourished c. 54–68 CE)

Lucius Annaeus Cornutus was born in Leptis Magna, Libya around 20 CE. Around 50, he began teaching philosophy, rhetoric, and grammar in Rome. He may have received the patronage of Seneca. Seneca's nephew Lucan was among Cornutus' students. Cornutus was the friend and teacher of Persius, whose *Satires* he helped to revise for publication after the poet's death. Nero banished him (in 66 or 68) for having indirectly belittled the Emperor's projected history of the Romans in heroic verse. Cornutus' one extant work, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium*, uses allegory to interpret traditional Greek myths and etymology to decode divine names. His lost writings include a critique of Aristotle's *Categories*, a treatise on spelling, and commentaries on Virgil.

Musonius Rufus (c. 20 to 30–c. 80 to 100 CE)

Gaius Musonius Rufus was a Roman knight from Volsinii, an Etruscan city of Italy. When Emperor Nero banished his friend Rubellius Plautus around 60 CE, Musonius accompanied him into exile in Asia Minor. After Rubellius died in 62 Musonius returned to Rome, where he taught and practiced Stoicism. On discovery of the Pisonian conspiracy in 65, Nero exiled Musonius to the desolate island of Gyaros in the Aegean Sea. He returned to Rome under the reign of Galba in 68 and tried to advocate peace to the Flavian army approaching Rome. In 70 Musonius secured the conviction of the philosopher Publius Egnatius Celer,

who had betrayed Rubellius' friend Barea Soranus. Musonius was exiled a second time, by Vespasian, but returned to Rome in the reign of Titus. Highly respected and a renowned teacher, Musonius had a considerable following. His greatest student was Epictetus.

For Musonius philosophy was nothing but the practice of noble behavior. He advocated the simplest vegetarian diet, minimal garments and footwear, and an austere abode. He taught that philosophy must be studied not to cultivate cleverness, but to develop good character, a sound mind, and a hardy body. Musonius condemned all luxuries and extramarital sex. He praised marriage and raising many children. He believed that women should receive the same education in philosophy as men, since the virtues are the same for both sexes (Stephens 2017).

Euphrates of Tyre (c. 35–c. 118 CE)

Possibly a student of Musonius, Euphrates was a highly respected Stoic famed for great eloquence. Hearing him once, Timocrates of Herakleia became his student. Epictetus commends Euphrates for an exemplary life of putting philosophical theory into practice (Frede 1997).

Epictetus (c. 55–c. 130 CE)

With a name meaning "Acquired," Epictetus was born a slave in the town of Hierapolis, Phrygia in central Asia Minor. At some point he traveled to Rome, where he was owned by Epaphroditus, Nero's freedman and administrative secretary. His master allowed him to study Stoicism with Musonius Rufus. After he was freed, Epictetus taught in Rome until he and other philosophers were expelled from the city by the Emperor Domitian (in 89 or 92 CE). Epictetus moved to Nicopolis in northwest Greece, set up a school, and taught Stoicism to adolescent Romans preparing for public service and other visitors. Epictetus never married, but late in life he adopted a child in need of parental care.

Other than a few fragments in later authors, his teachings survive in four books of *Discourses* and a short compendium called the *Handbook*, both recorded by his student Arrian of Nicomedia. Epictetus was lame, possibly because his master broke his leg. His experience as a slave surely contributed to the emphasis on freedom in his philosophy. Epictetus' biggest hero was Socrates, but he also admired Diogenes the Cynic. One of the greatest teachers of Stoicism in antiquity, Epictetus strongly influenced Marcus Aurelius, Christian writers, and the sixteenth century neo-Stoics Justus Lipsius and Guillaume du Vair. Rene Descartes, Blaise Pascal, Elizabeth Carter, Samuel Johnson, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Butler, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Mathew Arnold, Thomas Jefferson, and Walt Whitman all acclaimed Epictetus.

Hierocles (second cent. CE) and Cleomedes

We know little more about Hierocles than his two writings. His *Elements of Ethics* appears to be a textbook introduction to Stoicism describing the doctrine of *oikeiōsis*. The developmental process of perceiving what belongs to oneself, *oikeiōsis* steers social bonding and originates justice. Passages of his other work depict duties to others as an expanding series of concentric circles.

Though he may have lived as early as the first or as late as the mid-fourth century CE, the Stoic Cleomedes wrote *Elementary Theory* [*of the Heavens*]. This treatise on astronomy and cosmology preserves some earlier research of Posidonius and Eratosthenes (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003).

Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE)

Marcus was born to a prominent family in the town of Ucubi in southern Spain. While still a baby, his father died, and his grandfather adopted him. Said to be solemn from early childhood, Marcus was austere, modest, reserved, and yet friendly. The Emperor Hadrian nicknamed him Verissimus, meaning "Truest." In 138 Hadrian arranged for Marcus and his stepbrother Lucius Verus to be adopted by Antoninus Pius, who succeeded Hadrian as emperor. Marcus studied philology, literature, history, rhetoric, law, and philosophy. His two most eminent teachers were Herodes Atticus, the greatest Greek orator of the age, and Marcus Cornelius Fronto, the famous Latin orator regarded a close second only to Cicero. But it was the philosopher and politician Quintus Junius Rusticus (c. 100–c. 170 CE) who, lending Marcus his copy of Epictetus' *Discourses*, won the prince's devotion to Stoicism. The Stoic Apollonius of Chalcedon, Claudius Maximus, and Sextus of Chaeronea were three other philosophers who strongly influenced Marcus (Stephens 2012: 16). When Antoninus Pius died in 161, Marcus accepted the imperial powers conferred upon him by the senate only on the condition that his adoptive brother Lucius be his co-emperor. Marcus had been helping Pius run the empire for 14 years, had more distinguished offices, and was ten years older. So, Marcus had greater authority than Lucius. When Lucius died in 169, Marcus became sole emperor.

Marcus gave no title to his sole surviving philosophical work, written in non-technical Greek. In the first of its 12 books he thanks all his relatives, teachers, and mentors for the traits of character each gifted him. The remaining eleven books rehearse a set of philosophical themes, echoing Heraclitus and Epictetus, designed to console, invoke mindfulness, and exhort virtuous conduct. Traditionally called the *Meditations*, these texts remind Marcus of how to think about time, change, the self, values, and duty. A more accurate title is arguably the *Memoranda* (Stephens 2012: 2).

Over thirty years of marriage Marcus and his wife Faustina had no fewer than fourteen children. Only six lived to adulthood. Marcus grappled greatly with grief over these deaths. The mortality of all living things, including loved ones, is a common refrain in the *Memoranda*. Marcus affirms that Stoicism can dispel all fears, including the fear that one's child will die, with the reminder that all generations of human beings are leaves the wind blows to the ground (x. 34). He investigates the significance of a thing by viewing it as a whole composed of lesser parts, or as a constituent part of a greater whole. The world is a dynamic, eternal whole that endlessly recycles every fleeting part it spawns and reclaims. From this cosmic perspective, material wealth, fame, and bodily pleasures are transient, trivial, and empty. Precious is the wisdom and dignity of a righteous mind that acts with kindness and love. One must live harmoniously both locally with the fellow citizens of our community and globally with all rational beings sharing the same universe as home.

The System

Of all ancient philosophies, Stoicism is the most systematic. The Stoics divided philosophical discourse (doctrine) into three parts: logic, physics, and ethics. They offered several analogies to illustrate this tripartition. If philosophy is like a living being, then logic corresponds to the bones and sinews, ethics to the flesh and blood, and physics to the soul. If philosophy is compared to an egg, then logic is the shell, ethics is the white, and physics the yolk. If philosophy is like an orchard, then logic is the surrounding fence, physics the land and trees, and ethics the fruit (LS 1987, v. 1: 158–159). The organic nature of these analogies is telling. In contrast to Stoicism, the basis of Epicureanism is mechanical—

countless, lifeless atoms darting through a boundless, lifeless void. The Stoic system does not develop in a line from first principles. It is like a living, self-sustaining organism in which none of its organs or cells are unambiguously prior to any others and all are inseparably interconnected.

Logic

"Logic" derives from the Greek word *logos*. At its root *logos* means rational utterance. We are told that some Stoics divided the logical part [*to logikon*] of philosophical discourse into rhetoric and dialectic, and others added further divisions of canonic (dealing with criteria of truth) and definition. Canonic examines criteria of evaluating impressions to discover truth. Definition recognizes truth using common notions to grasp facts. Thus, canonic and definition fall within epistemology. By "rhetoric" the Stoics understood the science of speaking well on matters presented in plain narrative. They divided rhetoric into deliberative, forensic, and panegyric (lofty praise). Rhetoric involves the invention, expression, arrangement, and delivery of arguments. Mastery of rhetoric was very important for Stoics, whether they were lecturing to pupils, delivering public addresses, or debating with opponents.

The Stoics divided dialectic into subjects of discourse and language. The subject of language, both spoken and written, comprises the parts of speech, errors in syntax and in single words, poetical diction, verbal ambiguities, euphony, and music.[2]

The elements of discourse are "impressions" [*phantasiai*], propositions or "sayables" [*lekta*] and their constituent subjects and predicates, genera and species, moods, arguments, syllogisms, and fallacies. An impression is a sensory stimulus, a thought, or a memory that appears to a perceiving subject, making a (temporary) imprint on her soul. The Stoics were physicalists who believed that only physical bodies exist. Since one's soul causally interacts with one's body, they reasoned that body and soul are both physical. An impression either originates from a real object or does not. For example, as you look at the book you are holding, the image of the book imprints on your mind. When you vocalize "BOOK," the audible pulse of battered air is an utterance [*phōnē*]. This utterance is physical, the Stoics held, because it can be a cause. Only physical bodies can be causes. The vocalizations of nonhuman animals are mere noises, on their view. But when human beings vocalize in language, they produce not noise but articulate speech [*lexis*].

If you form the thought "this book is blue," that thought is a disposition of your physical soul and so a cause. If you say "this book is blue," the meaning expressed is called a "sayable" [*lekton*]. The Stoics held that sayables are not physical, and so do not *exist* as bodies do. Rather, sayables are incorporeals [*asōmata*] that *subsist*. If you think the sayable "I will read this book," then you can either assent to, or withhold assent from, that proposition. If you assent to it, this triggers an impulse to open the book and begin to read. For the Stoics, assent [*sunkatathesis*] is the locus of human freedom. Thus, the Stoics were compatibilists, holding that causal determinism is compatible with human freedom. Though all events are fated, some acts of adults are free. A free act is one an agent assents to that is also fated. The act is thus co-fated. If an agent withholds assent from a fated event, then she is like a dog tethered to a moving wagon that drags her along behind it despite her effort to resist. Consequently, the concepts of impressions, sayables, and assent intersect with the Stoic theories of dialectic, perception, and action. We can see why the Stoics regarded dialectic as indispensable.

The Stoics held that at birth the mind is like a blank sheet of paper. Impressions stamp themselves on the mind, and the goal is to assent only to those that proceed from real objects (or true thoughts). Such reliable mental stamps are called "apprehending"

[*kataleptikē*] impressions. They always result from real objects or facts and cannot ever come from what is false. So, apprehending impressions are always distinguishable from false impressions. But though the mind of a newborn baby is like a blank page, even that page has inherent characteristics the Stoics called "common conceptions" [*koinai ennoiai*]. These common conceptions are unconscious generalizations everyone with the same human physiology shares. From these common conceptions and myriad impressions, we do our best to acquire the skill of assenting only to sayables that reflect apprehending impressions. When we succeed, we gather true beliefs. When we fail, we get false beliefs. An assertible [*axiōma*] is a complete sayable that is either true or false. The truth or falsity of an assertible depends on who says it, where, and when. For example, "I am female" is not true when spoken by a male. "It is night" is not true when said in the day, etc. Assertibles can combine to form syllogisms. For example:

If Plato is alive, then Plato breathes.
Plato does not breathe.
Therefore, Plato is not alive.

Syllogisms are types of argument. An argument is a whole composed of premises and a conclusion. Syllogisms yield demonstrations. A demonstration is an argument that infers from what is better apprehended (the premises) something less obviously apprehended (the conclusion). Demonstrations help us form correct judgments. Skillful use and excellent memory of demonstrations yield scientific knowledge. Yet ordinary people are fallible, so they are fortunate to have more true beliefs than false beliefs. The Stoics regarded dialectic as a virtue. But since only the reason of the sage has been perfected into wisdom, only the sage has genuine systematic knowledge.

In sum, the "logical" part of Stoic doctrine treated all parts of language, including the causal powers of words, propositions, concepts, meaning, truth, argument, and thought. Their system of propositional logic was more flexible and more sophisticated than Aristotle's categorical logic, though this was not appreciated until the twentieth century (Sellars 2003: 56). Stoic dialectic comprised not only epistemology and etymology but also literary criticism and the allegorical interpretation of myths.

Physics

The physical part [*to phusikon*] of philosophical doctrine describes the totality of physical reality, causation, the elements of the universe, and the principles governing it. Thus, Stoic physics covers the subjects of ontology, cosmology, and theology, as well as astronomy, meteorology, and geography.[3]

The Stoics assert that the universe contains two indestructible, incorporeal principles: the active and the passive. The passive principle is substance without quality, i.e. matter. The active principle is the seminal reason that shapes matter. The Stoics call the active principle God, Zeus, Providence, Fate, Destiny, and Seminal Reason [*spermatikos logos*]. This principle transformed matter into four elements: air (cold), water (wet), earth (dry), and fire/aether (hot). These elements combine to make objects. God can be thought of as either the artificer, or the orderliness, of the cosmos. The Stoics argue that a) animate is better than inanimate; b) nothing is better than the cosmos; c) hence, the cosmos is animate. They deduced that the cosmos is a finite, spherical, living, intelligent, rational being endowed with soul, with fire as its ruling principle. The cosmos plus the infinite, incorporeal void the Stoics call the All, i.e. the totality of things. Time, the measure of the motion of the

cosmos, is also incorporeal. The past and the future are infinite, whereas the present is finite. The cosmos must end because it began. They also argue that a) that which has perishable parts is a perishable whole; b) the parts of the cosmos transform into each other and so perish; c) ergo, the whole cosmos must perish. The Stoics describe the world and the heavens as God's substance, so they hold that God is not anthropomorphic, but a living, immortal, rational, perfectly happy being, devoid of evil, that provides and cares for the cosmos and everything in it. Nature [*phusis*] refers to either that which holds the cosmos together or that which causes earthly things to grow. Nature is a force moving by itself, producing and preserving in being its offspring in accord with seminal principles, within set periods, and effecting results homogeneous with their sources. The Stoics describe nature as artistic fire [*pur technikon*] equivalent to fiery or creative breath [*pneuma*]. Because *pneuma* pervades every corner of the cosmos, all its parts are intimately linked in sympathy. The Stoics reason that this ubiquitous causal interlinkage is so seamless that all events are fated. Fate [*heimarmenē*] is thus an endless chain of causation whereby things exist. Consequently, Stoics other than Panaetius believed in divination [*mantikē*]—forecasting future events from present clues. The intensity of the tension [*tonos*] of the *pneuma* determines an object's qualities. Minerals have the lowest level of cohesion [*hexis*]. Next up is the vegetative nature [*phusis*] in plants. Above that the tension of *pneuma* in animate soul [*psuchē*] is found in animals with sensation and impulse. The highest level is rational soul [*logikē psuchē*] in adult human beings.

Stoic astronomy offered explanations of the stars, sun, moon, eclipses, comets, and meteors. Their meteorology explained the seasons, winds, clouds, evaporation, rain, rainbows, hoarfrost, snow, lightning, thunder, and typhoons. They provided accounts of the arrangement of the earth, earthquakes, the oceans, and the atmosphere. In geography the Stoics theorized five parallel celestial circles of the globe, the Arctic, the summer tropic, the circle of the equinox, the winter tropic, and the Antarctic, with five corresponding terrestrial zones.

Body [*sōma*] is finite substance (matter) that can act or be acted upon. Soul [*psuchē*] is an animating body consisting of fine breath [*pneuma*] that enables locomotion and perception. The human soul has eight parts: vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, the powers of reproduction and speech, and reason or the "ruling part" [*hēgemonikon*]. The *hēgemonikon* processes impressions [*phantasiai*], triggers impulses [*hormai*], and issues assents. Chrysippus located it in the heart, others in the brain. The Stoics held that individual souls of animals are parts of the soul of the cosmos and are perishable, whereas the soul of the cosmos is indestructible. Cleanthes, it is said, believed that after bodily death all souls survive until the conflagration [*ekpurōsis*]. According to the doctrine of the conflagration, creative fire consumes the whole cosmos, whereupon elemental fire and the other elements again coalesce into a new cosmos. (Boethus of Sidon and Panaetius rejected the doctrine of the conflagration.) Chrysippus evidently thought that only the souls of the wise survive until the conflagration. This compares interestingly with the report that the Stoics believed that the souls of heroes survive their bodily deaths. Epictetus held that when death separates souls from bodies, nature recycles both. The Stoics supposedly believed that spirit-guardians [*daimones*] are in sympathy with and watch over human beings.

Ethics

Ancient Greek philosophers agreed that the goal [*telos*] of all human effort is *eudaimonia*, an enduring state of happiness, well-being, or flourishing. The Stoics believed that the purpose of philosophy is to achieve this goal by mastering the art of living. Stoic ethics

provides education in this art. But to master this art, ethical knowledge must be consistently enacted in one's daily life. This requires perfection of the self.

According to the Stoics' doctrine of *oikeiōsis* ("appropriation" or "affinity"), what nature makes dearest to every animal is itself and its own constitution. This natural self-love leads to self-preservation. Self-preservation motivates an animal to seek what benefits it and avoid what harms it. For plants and non-rational animals, self-preservation is achieved simply by meeting biological needs for water, food, and bodily protection. But when a pre-rational child matures into a rational adult human being, self-preservation becomes more complex. Reason discerns both what is good for a person and how to get it, and what is bad for her and how to avoid it. So, the rationality of an adult becomes dearest to her, rather than, say, her infected toe or a morsel of food. Rationality *is* most of all the self of a rational being. Thus, her rational mind is what a fully realized human being seeks to preserve above all.

The Stoics define the goal [*telos*] as "living in agreement with nature." This formula carries rich layers of meaning. As a living organism, it agrees with one's biological nature to use one's perceptual abilities to sustain the good functioning of one's body. But human beings also naturally associate with others of their kind. So, it agrees with one's social nature to build relationships with others, make friends, create a family, and participate in society. This social dimension of human nature expresses the social theory of *oikeiōsis*. Recognizing the affinity we have with our neighbors, fellow citizens, and all human beings, we establish justice as the foundation of harmonious living in society.

Moreover, for a being with reason, living in agreement with nature means living in agreement with reason. The perfection of reason is what the Stoics call virtue. Virtue, they insisted, is the only good because it alone is necessary and sufficient for *eudaimonia*. Conversely, the only thing that is bad and that guarantees misery is the corruption of reason, called vice. All else is counted neither good nor bad but in the class of "indifferents." Indifferents are inherently neither beneficial nor harmful because they can be used either well (in which case they bring happiness) or badly (in which case they cause misery). Within the class of indifferents orthodox Stoics distinguished the "preferred" from the "dispreferred." Preferred indifferents usually promote one's physical well-being, so selecting them is *usually* commended by reason. Preferred indifferents include life, health, pleasure, beauty, strength, wealth, and good reputation. The dispreferred indifferents are their opposites. It is usually appropriate to avoid the dispreferred indifferents, but in unusual circumstances it can be virtuous to select them. The virtue or vice of the agent is determined not by the possession of an indifferent, but by how it is used. Epictetus compares indifferents to game equipment. A ball lacks intrinsic value. How well a player uses the ball displays her excellence in the ball game. Therefore, the virtuous use of indifferents makes a life happy, the vicious use makes it unhappy.

The Stoics divided virtue into four main types: wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. Wisdom they subdivided into good sense, good calculation, quick-wittedness, discretion, and resourcefulness. Justice they subdivided into piety, honesty, equity, and fair dealing. Varieties of courage they identified as endurance, confidence, high-mindedness, cheerfulness, and industriousness. Types of temperance they named good discipline, seemliness, modesty, and self-control. Similarly, they divided vice into foolishness, injustice, cowardice, intemperance, and the rest. The Stoics argued that the virtues are inter-entailing and constitute a unity: to have one is to have them all. The Stoics argued that, just as one person is a poet, an orator, and a general, so too the virtues are unified but apply to different spheres of practice.

Wisdom is defined as knowledge of what is good, what is bad, and what is neither. Wisdom is the virtue of the sage. The sage recognizes that living in agreement with nature also means living in agreement with the entire cosmos. The sage is a mortal microcosm in harmony with the providential macrocosm, embracing all events and affirming their meaning and necessity. The sage is free of all disturbing passions [*pathē*]. The Stoics regard as mental illnesses fear, anger, hatred, resentment, envy, jealousy, greed, grief, pity, and lust. These violent passions either are, or result from, false judgments about what things are good, bad, or indifferent. In contrast, the sage experiences three "good feelings" [*eupatheiai*]: joy [*khara*], caution [*eulabeia*], and rational wish [*boulēsis*]. Joy is expressed as delight, mirth, or cheerfulness. Caution is displayed in reverence or modesty. Rational wish is shown in benevolence, friendliness, respect, or affection.

The Stoics believed that the sage is as rare as the phoenix. Some suggested that Socrates, Zeno of Citium, or Cato the Younger may have been sages. The rest of us they regarded as fools. Within the class of fools, one who makes progress toward virtue is a "progressor" [*prokoptōn*]. A progressor can perform an "appropriate action" [*kathēkon*], like exercising to be fit or caring for one's parents. But only the sage performs actions wisely, comprehending their harmony with the universe. The sage performs a "perfect action" [*katorthōma*]. The early Stoics asserted that the sage was infallible. If so, then the concept of the sage serves as a prescriptive ideal Stoics endeavor to approximate. The sage was said to participate in politics if nothing hinders it. The final stage of *oikeiōsis* occurs when a person realizes affinity with not only her family, friends, and neighbors, but also with her fellow-citizens. This doctrine of social *oikeiōsis* explains the origin of justice. Stoics see themselves both as citizens of their country and as citizens belonging to the cosmic realm of rational beings everywhere. Because of this hugely influential doctrine of cosmopolitanism, the Stoics dismissed exile as affecting only their bodies, not themselves. This idea of twin citizenship conferred upon Stoics dual responsibilities. They had both civic duties to inhabitants of whatever locales they occupied or visited, and duties of solidarity with all persons, whether human or divine, throughout the universe, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, creed, age, ancestry, gender, gender expression, or disability. Active participation in the government of their city, province, and republic, as well as uncompromising fidelity to their friends no matter the danger of loss of life or limb, distinguished the Stoics from the Epicureans.

Notes

1 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (abbreviated DL) Book 7, is the source of most of the details reported here on Zeno of Citium, Cleanthes, Aristo, and Chrysippus, as well as much of the accounts of Stoic logic, physics, and ethics.
2 For more on this topic, see Atherton's chapter, "Stoics and Epicureans on Language and the World."
3 See Ioppolo's chapter, "Nature, God, and Determinism in Early Stoicism."

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3

ARGUMENTATIVE STRATEGIES OF PYRRHONIAN AND ACADEMIC SKEPTICS

Renata Ziemińska

Hellenistic skeptics developed arguments for the suspension of all judgments [*epochē*], with all of these arguments showing the uncertainty of philosophical and common beliefs. Discussion with other schools caused skeptics to develop some defensive arguments: against the *apraxia* charge, against inconsistency in skeptical philosophy, and concerning the self-refutation charge. The first type of argument (for *epochē*) was common to all ancient skeptics; however, the defensive strategies were divided: radical in the case of Pyrrhonians and moderate in the case of Academic skeptics. Presenting the defensive strategies, I will focus on the inconsistency and self-refutation issues. The apraxia issues are discussed in detail in a later chapter.

Skeptical Arguments for the Suspension of All Judgments

The first declared skeptic known in the European tradition was Pyrrho of Elis (ca. 360–270 BC). He was an enthusiast of Socrates, trained in dialectics, who took part in Alexander the Great's expedition to India. After returning to Greece he settled in Elis and led his own school of philosophy. His student Timon wrote Pyrrho's ideas and transferred them to Athens (Hankinson 1995: 52; Bett 2003: 1).

Pyrrho constructed an ontological argument for skepticism, showing the discrepancy between the world and the human mind: things in the world are indifferent, unstable, and indeterminate; therefore, our opinions are neither true nor false, and we should be without opinions [*adoxastoi*] (LS, 1F; Bett 2003:16). In other words, phenomena are fluent and complicated (the ontology of process), and human concepts are too simple to capture them. This discrepancy renders hopeless the successful predication of any property to things/phenomena. According to Pyrrho, a wise person lives without beliefs, says of every single thing that it "no more is than is not, or it both is and is not, or it neither is nor is not" (LS, 1F) and achieves peace of mind [*ataraxia*]. Inspired by his travel to India, Pyrrho applied the Buddhist logic of the quadrilemma: "Everything is real and is not real, both real and not real, neither real nor not real" (Kuzminski 2008: 56). If this is so, then no simple assertion is reasonable, and all judgments should be suspended.

Arcesilaus of Pitane (ca. 315–241 BC) and Carneades of Cirene (ca. 214–128 BC) are two skeptics from Plato's Academy. Arcesilaus was the scholarch of Plato's Academy when

Timon resided in Athens. Timon accused him of repeating Pyrrho's ideas without mentioning his name. Arcesilaus referred to skeptical elements in Socrates' and Plato's teaching. Carneades was also scholarch of Plato's Academy and a famous orator who delivered in Rome (155 BC) two speeches about justice. On the first day he praised justice, but the next day he refuted all his own arguments. It was a rhetorical show of using arguments pro and contra (Thorsrud 2009: 60).

During their argumentative disputes with the Stoics, Arcesilaus and Carneades formulated arguments against certainty (we can call them *epistemological arguments* for skepticism). Arcesilaus argued with Zeno of Citium against the criterion of truth as cataleptic sense perception (self-evident, certain, grasping reality in the same way a hand grasps things; *Acad.* 1.41), which is strikingly clear and "draws us into assent" (*M* 7.257). According to Arcesilaus, this kind of perception could not provide a guarantee of truth and could easily be mistaken for a false appearance (*Acad.* 2.40; *M* 7.154). Therefore, we cannot trust our perceptions, even our cataleptic perceptions, and "the wise person suspends judgment about everything" (*M* 7.155). The suspension of judgment, or *epochē*, was recommended by the Stoics themselves with regard to noncataleptic perceptions. The term *epochē* was coined in the heat of Arcesilaus' dispute with the Stoics (later it will be a technical term and a sign of recognition for ancient skeptics). Arcesilaus invokes this term to say that *epochē* should be applied to all judgments (*PH* 1.232) and "thought that we shouldn't assert or affirm anything, or approve it with assent: we should always curb our rashness and restrain ourselves from any slip" (*Acad.* 1.45).

Carneades continued to argue against the Stoic criterion of truth as cataleptic perception (during his dispute with Chrysippus). He pointed to objects that are difficult to distinguish (eggs, twins, pillars), dreams and madness. Cicero reports, "I recognize, after all, that my impressions misrepresent the oar and show several colours on the pigeon's neck, though there isn't more than one" (*Acad.* 2.79). The sun seems to be smaller than Earth, and a large ship seems very little when viewed from a distance (*Acad.* 2.82). Later, Sextus Empiricus gave a similar report:

> The same boat appears from a distance small and stationary, but close at hand large and in motion. […] The same oar appears bent in water but straight when out of it. […] Doves' necks appear different in colour depending on the different ways they turn them.
>
> (*PH* 1.118–1.120)

Carneades concluded that infallible cataleptic perception is impossible to find. Even under the best conditions for observation, we have no guarantee that we assent to appearance "that cannot be false" (*Acad.* 2.58). Thus, a wise person suspends judgment about everything.

Aenesidemus of Knossos (1st century BC), probably a member of the skeptical Academy who founded the Neo-Pyrrhonian school at Alexandria, is likely the author of the Ten Modes, the list of skeptical arguments against the credibility of perceptual beliefs (*M* 7.345; DL 9.78). These arguments were presented by Sextus Empiricus (*PH* 1.36–1.163), Diogenes Laertius (DL 9.78–88), Philo of Alexandria (*On Drunkenness* 169–202) and others. Aenesidemus assumes that the same thing cannot both have and not have the same property at the same time. The argumentative strategy is simple: to show many examples of conflicting impressions (a situation when the same thing appears to have a property and appears to not have the property, for instance, in different circumstances). Two contradictory impressions cannot be veridical; at least one is false, but we have the problem of judging them.

The first mode, following Sextus' *Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes (Outlines of Pyrrhonism*) concerns the problem of how to judge between human and animal impressions. The second mode is related to similar differences among humans. The third mode notes the differences between particular senses (an example: the same painting can present recesses to the eye while presenting smoothness to touch; Bailey 2002: 132). The problem also arises that objects can have qualities that are inaccessible to any of our senses. The fourth mode indicates that our perception depends on circumstances; for instance, "the same honey appears sweet to me, but bitter to people with jaundice" (*PH* 1.101), or

> the same wine appears sour to people who have just eaten dates or figs, but it seems to be sweet to people who have consumed nuts or chickpeas. And the bathhouse vestibule warms people entering from outside but chills people leaving if they spend any time there.
>
> (*PH* 1.110)

The fifth mode is related to distance, which influences the way we see objects. "The same tower appears from a distance round, but from close at hand square" (*PH* 1.118). The sixth mode concerns different "admixtures" that impact the reception of stimuli ("the same sound appears different in open places and in narrow winding places"; *PH* 1.126). The seventh mode notes the dependence of the qualities of things on their quantities; for example, "grains of sand scattered apart from one another appear rough, but when combined in a heap affect our senses smoothly" (*PH* 1.130). These modes show that conflicting impressions exist and that we have no criterion by which to judge between them when we try to fix our beliefs about external objects.

The eighth mode is slightly more general and is concerned with the relativity of observed objects to the subject judging and to other objects. The ninth mode refers to the notion that values are dependent on the frequency of objects. The tenth mode shows that laws and religious beliefs are also dependent on time and place. The plurality of laws and religions supports the thesis that the world appears in many different ways but that we have no criterion by which to isolate true impressions. Therefore, Aenesidemus concludes that one cannot say how external objects are and that one should suspend all judgments about them (*PH* 1.163). For more on the Ten Modes, see Annas and Barnes (1985).

Agrippa's Five Modes was another list of skeptical arguments (*PH* 1.164–177; DL 9.88–89). Agrippa, a mysterious figure from the first century, living between Aenesidemus and Sextus, listed five arguments for skepticism: the disagreement among ordinary people and philosophers (the problem of which opinion is true), the regression *ad infinitum* in the process of justification (any reason needs a further proof), the relativity of sense perceptions (the problem of which appearance is true), the groundlessness of assumptions (dogmatism is unacceptable), and the circularity in the process of justification (*M* 7.341; *PH* 1.164). Aenesidemus' Ten Modes are summarized in the third Agrippean mode. The third and first modes are the starting point: the relativity of perceptual beliefs and the disagreement between people require starting the process of justification if we wish to assent to anything as true.

The second mode is original compared to previous skeptical modes. It is related to Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* (Barnes 1990: 121) and introduces the concept of infinite regress: "what is brought forward as a source of conviction for the matter proposed itself needs another such source, which itself needs another, and so *ad infinitum*, so that we have no point from which to begin to establish anything" (*PH* 1.166). This mode points to an impossibility of success in any process of justification: every demonstration depends

on various assumptions; therefore, the validity of each assumption must be demonstrated (as must the validity of the inference). These demonstrations would require further demonstrations; thus, the demonstration process would stretch to infinity. The fourth and fifth modes show that this regress allows no escape. An assumption taken for granted without demonstration is unworthy of credence, and circular reasoning cannot establish a connection with reality.

The second, fourth and fifth modes constitute a trilemma. In seeking to justify a thesis, we are left with three options, none of which is acceptable: proceeding *ad infinitum*, adopting groundless assumptions or falling into circular reasoning. The trilemma is a specific kind of argumentation for the impossibility of efficient justification. When we combine it with the relativity of perception and the disagreement between people, the reasonable acceptance of any opinion appears to be impossible. *Epochē* is the only reasonable recommendation.

Presenting the Ten Modes and the Five Modes, Sextus Empiricus suggests an inability to see any reason for preferring any beliefs and that the "mind is paralysed because it is being pulled equally strongly in two opposite directions at the same time" (Bailey 2002: 129). One option may usually appear more persuasive than the other. However, for Sextus, only absolute certainty could decide in favor of one side. For him, more or less uncertainty is unimportant.

Sextus Empiricus (ca. 160–210 CE) was a Greek physician, a member of the empirical school of medicine, living probably in Rome or Alexandria (Nerczuk 2010: 8). His preserved numerous works are the main source of information about ancient skepticism. He adds to the earlier modes the argument against any criterion of truth and the argument against any valid demonstration. These arguments are based on the structure of Agrippa's trilemma, which makes the rational justification of any criterion of truth impossible. "If there is a criterion, either it has been judged or it is unjudged, and we reach one of two conclusions—either infinite regress or that something is said, absurdly, to be its own criterion" (*M* 7.441).

Additionally, Sextus formulates his own argument against any valid demonstration (*Argument Against Demonstration,* AAD). The first reason is that "the premises of the demonstration, whichever side they belong to, are untrustworthy and insecure" (*M* 8.356). The second reason is that conclusiveness is controversial (the connection between premises and a conclusion; *PH* 2.146). The third reason is that demonstration does not reveal anything new about the world and is based on empirically observed correlations (*PH* 2.196). Thus, no valid demonstration can resolve uncertainty.

After presenting these general arguments, Sextus discusses the main fields of human knowledge (*Against the Logicians, Against the Ethicists,* and *Against the Physicists)* and the specialized sciences (*Against the Grammarians, Against the Rhetoricians, Against the Geometers, Against the Arithmeticians, Against the Astrologers,* and *Against the Musicians*), arguing in a similar manner for no certainty and no rational basis to prefer one thesis over another.

The skeptical conclusion and the recommendation of *epochē* are problematic to everyone who believes in human cognitive capacities, desires to know the truth and is ready to continue putting forth the effort to pursue the cognitive exploration of the world. Both the Epicureans and the Stoics developed the *apraxia* charge against the skeptics (see Chapter 15), arguing that skepticism, even if irresistible, leads to an impossibility of action and life; thus, this philosophy is falsified by everyday life.

In response, the Academic skeptics developed a defensive argumentative strategy: skepticism is a theory, and action is possible without any theory. According to Arcesilaus,

skeptics can guide their actions by the reasonable [*eulogon*] (*M* 7.158); according to Carneades, action can be based on credible [*pithanon*] appearances (*M* 7.166). Credibility has a hierarchy: 1) credibility that consists only in the fact that something appears to be true in an evident manner; 2) credibility based on obviousness and the coherence between different appearances; and 3) credibility based on obviousness, coherence, and confirmation through scrutiny and further examination (*M* 7.184).

Neo-Pyrrhonian skeptics developed a more radical answer to the *apraxia* charge, without reference to reasons or credibility. Sextus writes that to act in the skeptical manner is to passively receive stimuli and react to them, to follow appearances, and to rely on "guidance by nature, necessitation by feelings [hunger conducts us to food and thirst to drink], handing down of laws and customs, and teaching of kinds of expertise" (*PH* 1.23–24). According to Sextus, a skeptic lives in an animal-like manner; the action of skeptics is based on habit. Let us observe how this strategy works in the case of a sophisticated activity such as doing philosophy.

Defensive Arguments Against the Inconsistency Charge

The inconsistency charge was embedded into skepticism as a philosophy since its beginning. Pyrrho faced the allegation that he did not want to judge anything while at the same time claiming to know how to find peace and happiness. He responded by narrating the story of Apelles of Kos, a court painter of Alexander the Great. Apelles could not paint a horse's foam and was so upset that he flung at the picture a sponge; to his astonishment, the mark of the sponge produced the effect of foam on the horse's muzzle (*PH* 1.28). Therefore, his answer was that his skepticism was a lucky discovery that happened to him and that he wished to share with others. It was not a sufficient answer if, after the lucky discovery, he believed that living without beliefs was a good way of life. In addition, if he did not believe, the status of his recommendation of this way of life was unclear.

Academic skeptics continued to argue against the inconsistency charge. Cicero reports that "Arcesilaus used to deny that anything could be known, not even the residual claim Socrates had allowed himself, i.e., the knowledge that he didn't know anything…he thought that we shouldn't assert or affirm anything, or approve it with assent" (*Acad.* 1.45). However, this passage contains two theses: nothing can be known and all judgments should be suspended. If they express Arcesilaus' view, then how could they be reconciled with the principle of *epochē*?

The simplest way of avoiding the allegation of inconsistency is the dialectical interpretation, according to which skepticism is not a philosophical doctrine but a method of argumentation, leading to the suspension of judgment. In this interpretation, Arcesilaus adopts the hypothetical assumptions of Stoicism (its conception of knowledge, beliefs, and logical principles), then shows a contradiction within it and recommends the suspension of judgment. However, he does not accept either assumptions or conclusions. In addition, as he does not accept any theses, they *a fortiori* cannot be inconsistent. Additionally, the theory of rational action [*eulogon*] can be taken as a pure possibility of acting without any beliefs.

Arguments against the dialectical interpretation exist. Arcesilaus begins with the assumptions of Stoicism but only to refine them: he rejects the criterion of truth, he elevates the standards for rational beliefs, he adjusts them to the requirements of skepticism, and he creates his own norms for rationality and assent, with his standards of assent being higher than those of Stoicism. Additionally, if Arcesilaus does not hold any views, it is unclear why, and in what sense, he recommends *epochē*.

Also problematic is in what sense Carneades' words concerning *epochē* and credibility [*pithanon*] represent his own view. Defending the consistency of his own skepticism, Carneades spoke about two kinds of *assent* [*synkatathesis*]. Cicero expressed them as proper *assent* and *approval* (*Acad.* 2.104). Proper *assent* is the acceptance of something as true, while *approval* is an action based on information that is regarded as though it is true while not accepted as true (Bett 1990: 14; Brittan 2006: xxvii). Such a reading of Carneades was made by his pupil Clitomachus. Plato's Academy had also an alternative reading. According to Philo of Larissa, approval is a kind of acceptance of something as true, an assent without certainty (*Acad.* 2.78). The approval in Philo's reading can be described as weaker assent or weak assertion, rational but uncertain (in Clitomachus' reading, approval is involuntary and irrational). Regardless, the information that is *pithanon* deserves *approval* only.

Clitomachus' reading fits the dialectical interpretation, which denies holding any beliefs to Carneades. Philo's reading fits the nondialectical interpretation and attributes to Carneades his own, even if uncertain, beliefs. Importantly, if Carneades' skepticism is merely a method, it relies on certain theoretical assumptions: standards of assent, rules of inference, empirical data, etc. These hidden assumptions are inconsistent with the principle of *epochē*.

When we observe the weaknesses of the dialectical interpretation, Philo's interpretation seems to be the only one that avoids inconsistency. From Philo's perspective, Carneades' philosophy (as reported by Clitomachus, Cicero or Sextus Empiricus) becomes internally consistent. Carneades can hold beliefs with weak assent and his philosophy consists of rational beliefs without certainty. Thus, suspending strong assertion can be combined with weak assertion in life and in philosophy (on the grounds of rational credibility), and this kind of skepticism can be applied to the rational conduct of action and fits the philosophical practice in the skeptical Academy, as described in the sources. Philo seems to make the original distinction between certainty and truth and to invent the assertion without certainty. Philo's interpretation can be described as nondialectical and quasi-fallibilist (Thorsrud 2009: 83); I develop this kind of interpretation in Ziemińska (2015).

However, this way of reading Carneades was accused of betraying skepticism. Sextus Empiricus classifies Carneades not as a skeptic but as a negative dogmatic who assents to the thesis that truth is unknowable (*PH* 1.3, 1.226). According to Cicero and Clitomachus, Carneades said that a skeptic cannot accept the thesis that "nothing is apprehensible" because such a statement implies a contradiction or an unjustified exception (*Acad.* 2.28). However, Sextus' accusation fits Philo's reading. Additionally, Aenesidemus attacked the Academics for allowing weak assent and rational credibility (LS, 71C)

To avoid such an accusation, Sextus Empiricus developed a radical Pyrrhonian answer to the inconsistency charge. According to him, skepticism is not a theory but a way of life, specifically, the disposition to/habit of suspending judgments. According to Sextus, as a cure for the disease of dogmatism, skeptical arguments and conclusions have only an instrumental value. Even the principle of the suspension of judgment [*epochē*] is not a belief. According to Hankinson (1995), the principle of the suspension of judgment is a state of mind causally produced by equipollent arguments and described as a lack of judgment. Additionally, the education of skeptical apprentices consists of promoting the skeptical attitude, not a set of beliefs. Hankinson reconstructs skeptical practice as a causal chain independent of will, described from the perspective of an external observer. Appearances are impulses, and a series of impulses produces habits and dispositions.

Indeed, at the beginning of the *Outlines of Skepticism*, Sextus writes that he, as the author, would not consider any sentence in the book as true (*PH* 1.4). These statements

serve only to express what appears to the author, reporting his sensations and feelings (*PH* 1.15). Skeptics are like babies who cry to express the feeling of pain. Their speech acts are expressive (in which the illocutionary force expresses the speaker's feelings), not assertive (in which the illocutionary force asserts the truth). For instance, when Sextus argues against the possibility of any criterion of truth and presents the conclusion that a criterion of truth is impossible to establish, he does not take this conclusion as true but takes the conclusion as an expression of his personal feeling, suspending any judgment about it (*PH* 2.79).

Importantly, however—insofar as skepticism is only an expression, a habit, a disposition or a therapy—it ceases to be a rational project. Here, consistency is achieved at the price of rationality. The causal or therapeutic reading is a good argumentative strategy to effectively avoid inconsistency. The lack of beliefs makes it impossible to accuse the skeptic of inconsistency because such an accusation would be a categorical error: if one has no beliefs, then one cannot be inconsistent (Thorsrud 2009).

However, when we think about skepticism as a philosophy with strict rational norms supported by strict arguments, such a reading is puzzling. Sextus suggests that skeptical arguments can be used instrumentally as therapeutic means or treated as appearances in an expressive mode. However, such arguments are effective only for people in a rational mood. They are not rhetorical tricks or propaganda techniques but "unadorned chains of thought" (Bailey 1990: 38). However, when skeptical arguments are interpreted as rationalistic arguments ("in accordance with the dogmatist's rationalistic code"; Bailey 1990: 38), they lead to self-refutation.

Defensive Arguments Concerning the Self-Refutation Charge

The reading of Sextan skepticism as a two-stage process better clarifies matters. According to Bailey (1990; 2002), we should distinguish the developing from the mature Pyrrhonian skeptic. A developing skeptic holds beliefs, considers skeptical arguments to be persuasive, searches for truth in a rational manner, and suspends judgments for rational reasons. Later, however, a developing skeptic notes that skeptical arguments are also uncertain and that global skepticism is self-refuting. This acknowledgment is the final stage of skeptical development, after which the skeptic is mature.

A mature skeptic does not hold any beliefs and has no rational norms but suspends judgment out of habit. This habit is the source of the skeptic's activity and applied methods. At this stage, arguments are used instrumentally as an effective means of anti-dogmatic therapy.

Arguments play a dual role in the two-stage process. A developing skeptic "is firmly committed to the objective validity of the principles of reasoning that underlie the tropes devised by Agrippa and Aenesidemus" (Bailey 1990: 42), which can explain their suspension of judgment. Mature skeptics do not believe in the rational force of their arguments but use them instrumentally to evoke the suspension of judgments in other people.

Such a reading is easy for a mature skeptic (it takes flight from any rational charge; Ziemińska 2013; 71), but it does not cancel the problem in the position of a developing skeptic. During the development process, a skeptic accepts some rational norms and even makes the existing norms stronger. A developing skeptic must undergo the process of accepting the self-refutation of his own position to become a mature skeptic. Let us observe how the process is described at the end of *Against the Logicians* in the case of the argument against all demonstrations (*Argument Against Demonstrations*, AAD).

Arguing against demonstrations, Sextus points to the lack of reliable assumptions (as we have no criterion of truth), the circularity between premises and conclusions, and the

infinite regress in justifying the correctness of demonstration (*M* 8.424–452). This series of arguments can be treated as the AAD.

The Stoics formulated a counterargument against the AAD that is important to the question of the consistency of Sextus' position.

> [T]he argument against demonstration either is a demonstration or is not a demonstration; and if it is not a demonstration, it is untrustworthy, while if it is a demonstration, there is demonstration.
>
> (*M* 8.465)

Sextus typically refuses to accept the conclusion of his own argument by limiting his statements to the reporting of appearances ("that the argument against demonstration is merely persuasive, and that for the moment it persuades them and induces assent"; *M* 8.473). Mark McPherran (1987: 301) thinks this step is futile, while Luca Castagnoli (2010: 285) believes this step is effective (for more, see Ziemińska 2013).

In the final step of the defense, Sextus refers to the metaphors of purgative herbs and the ladder. McPherran believes this final stage is an acceptance of self-refutation, while Castagnoli considers it to be the final defense against the charge of self-refutation, as self-refutation concerns only the dogmatic interpretation of skeptical theses.

> [J]ust as purgatives after driving the fluids out of bodies eliminate themselves as well, so too the argument against demonstration, after doing away with all demonstration, can cancel itself as well. And again, just as it is not impossible for the person who has climbed to a high place by a ladder to knock over the ladder with his foot after his climb, so it is not unlikely that the skeptic too, having got to the accomplishment of his task by a sort of step-ladder—the argument showing that there is not demonstration—should do away with this argument.
>
> (*M* 8.480–481)

This metaphor is supposed to show that the demonstration against demonstrations is natural. Proponents of the acceptance of self-refutation argue that mature skeptics can accept self-refutation because they have no reason to treat self-refutation as an error. McPherran (1987: 290) writes that Sextan skepticism tends to "accept—and even embrace—the charge of self-refutation." Additionally, according to Hankinson, Pyrrhonists "happily embraced self-refutation" (Hankinson 1995: 18); Sextus was "perfectly happy about the self-refuting (or as Sextus prefers to say, self-cancelling) nature of his expressions" (Hankinson 1995: 299).

Indeed, Sextus writes that the skeptic's words cancel themselves out and that this is not a problem but simply a consequence of the skeptical position. Skeptical utterances resemble statements such as "Everything is false" or "Nothing is true" (*PH* 1.14; *M* 7.399; *M* 8.55), which are models of self-refutation in Plato's *Theaetetus*. Sextus repeatedly compares words uttered by skeptics to purgatives that eliminate themselves. Skeptical utterances "can be destroyed by themselves, being cancelled along with what they are applied to, just as purgative drugs" (*PH* 1.206; cf. DL 9.76).

Let us focus on the metaphor of the ladder. The metaphor is of the development of a skeptic apprentice. A developing skeptic climbs the rungs of the ladder by accepting increasingly more skeptical arguments. At the top of the ladder, the skeptic performs the act of self-reflection and notices that his own skeptical arguments are no better than others. A real crisis arrives when the developing skeptic reaches the argument against all

rational arguments. Skeptical rational philosophy considers arguments to be the crown of philosophy, and skeptics instantly notice that this skeptical argument is self-refuting. When they realize it, they have no other choice but to cast off the entire set of skeptical arguments. This moment of crisis marks the final stage of the skeptical maturation process: only after rejecting their own arguments can they become a consistent skeptic who no longer hold any beliefs.

Even if the charge of inconsistency fails to reach the mature skeptic, it cannot be avoided with respect to the maturation process insofar as it is rationally construed. To climb the rungs of the skeptical ladder, one must accept arguments and their assumptions, inferential rules and conclusions. During the maturation process of the skeptic, the entire series of arguments was employed.

Sextus presents Aenesidemus' Ten Modes as a rational means of suspending all judgments. However, if we treat these arguments as rational, we must accept their premises and conclusions. At the same time, the act of accepting the *epochē* thesis is incompatible with its content. When Agrippa's five tropes are employed to justify the thesis that no thesis can be rationally justified, a pragmatic inconsistency occurs between the content of this thesis and the act of accepting it by a developing skeptic. Similarly, when a developing skeptic is persuaded by Sextus' argument that no criterion of truth can be rationally justified, the act of accepting this argument as rational contradicts its very conclusion.

The casting off of the ladder is a symbol of transition in the skeptical position—at this moment, developing skeptics cease to respect their own beliefs and deliver a dramatic farewell to the pursuit of the truth. Afterward, they become mature skeptics, who achieve consistency but only at the expense of losing the rational grounds of their positions.

Mature skeptics, who have cast off the skeptical ladder and no longer hold any beliefs, need not develop a defensive response to the self-refutation of their theses, and developing skeptics have no means of avoiding self-refutation. Self-refutation happens to developing skeptics and is not a danger for mature skeptics. The latter avoid it by asserting nothing (but a problem arises as to whether someone can assert nothing and do philosophy).

Self-refutation is neither falsification nor a contradiction between two explicit statements. Rather, it is a situation in which "the person who states that *p* ends up admitting that not-*p* in the act, or as a consequence of, stating that *p*" (Castagnoli 2010: 173). It happens in a speech act in which the content contradicts the act's own implicit assumptions. Every act of assertion implies that the asserted content is taken as true. When I say that nothing is true, this act of assertion contradicts its own content: I take as true that nothing is true. The statement is a contradiction between the explicit and implicit content, hidden in the act of assertion. However, we do not know which content is false; thus, no content is falsified. The contradiction compels only the speaker to distance themselves from the act of assertion. Sextus backs the assertion based on his conclusions, leaving readers confused. Certainty is destroyed, but nothing is asserted. The problem is skeptical identity.

As expressed in his arguments, Sextan radical skepticism can be verbalized as "No thesis is rationally preferable to its own negation." (Bailey 2002: 135) Nobody can assert it without falling into self-refutation, as pragmatic inconsistency. In this sense, the skeptically expressed "thesis" is inconsistent, and perhaps to avoid this inconsistency, ancient Pyrrhonians withdrew all assertions. Through this action, they withdrew from rational discussion. However, the set of arguments used with conviction as an intellectual obligation for every rational subject by developing skeptics and used instrumentally as therapy by mature skeptics remains as the treasure of rational philosophy.

Pyrrhonian and Academic Strategies—What Is the Difference?

The difference between Pyrrhonian and Academic strategies concerns the defensive strategy. The main problem for ancient skepticism was the *apraxia* charge. Academic skeptics found a resolution to the problem in the distinction between theory and practice, assuming that skepticism was a theory and that practice was possible without theory. They developed the theory of credibility and the idea of weak assent as a theoretical description of our human practice without certainty. However, this resolution exposed them to the accusation of either inconsistency (Clitomachus' reading) or betraying skepticism (Philo's reading).

The Neo-Pyrrhonists rejected the Academic strategy of weak assertion and developed the radical strategy of no assertion: the strategy of action and philosophy without belief. Skepticism is no longer a theory different from action; rather, skepticism is a way of life. This radical strategy of no assertion was incompatible with rational norms. The only rescue was to leave rational philosophy and to declare that all speech acts by skeptics are expressive. Some of our beliefs may be based on animal faith, and in local contexts, we can act instrumentally, such as an attorney who develops arguments for the innocence of his client (such local activity is based on many other beliefs accepted as true). However, the Pyrrhonian strategy involved the entirety of life, including philosophy without any assertion. After its implementation, Pyrrhonism split into two stages: developing and mature. The first ends with self-refutation; the second lacks rational norms. This taking flight from rationality seems to be a pure argumentative strategy to avoid inconsistency. The strategy stands in contrast to skeptical arguments that seem to be the best product of rational thinking.

Presently, the most acceptable version of ancient skepticism, with the best defensive strategy, seems to be the Carneadean skepticism in Philo's reading, which is moderate and rational, a kind of quasi-fallibilism.

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4

DOCUMENTING HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

Cicero as a Source and Philosopher

Thornton C. Lockwood, Jr.

How are we to balance our understanding of Cicero, on the one hand, as a source for the historically accurate documentation of Hellenistic philosophy and, on the other hand, as a Roman philosopher who engages with and adapts his depictions of the various Hellenistic schools of philosophy in light of his own philosophical commitments? In support of the former side of the balance: Cicero by his own report possessed a life-long interest in philosophy and had the opportunity to study with philosophers of all the major schools, such as the Epicurean Phaedrus and the Stoic Diodotus, the Academic philosophers Philo of Larissa and Antiochus of Ascalon, and the Stoic philosopher Posidonius.[1] Almost all of Cicero's philosophical works regularly quote by name and show a nuanced understanding of the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, including their historical development and inter- and intra-scholastic disagreements. In several places Cicero explicitly notes that the goal of his philosophical treatises is to transmit Greek philosophy to a Roman audience, presumably in a fashion that is faithful to its sources (*De Fin*. 1.1–10; *De Div*. 1.12; *Tusc*. 1.1–6, 2.5; *DND* 1.4; *De Off*. 1.1; *Acad*. 2.5–6). Most famously, in a letter to his friend Atticus in 45 BCE, Cicero describes his philosophical works as "translations [ἀπόγραφα]. They don't cost so much trouble therefore; I only contribute the language, in which I am well provided" (*Letters to Atticus* XII, 52).

In support of the latter side of the balance: Beginning with the landmark scholarship of (Schofield 1986, MacKendrick 1989, and Powell 1995a), over the last few decades scholars have begun to re-appreciate that Cicero's philosophical works exhibit formidable argumentative and rhetorical skills which suggests that he is doing much more than simply translating Greek philosophical texts and concepts into Latin (even if he regularly reflects on the philosophical nuances of specific Greek or Latin terms, as Powell (1995c) discusses). Although it is true that Cicero regularly provides Roman *exempla* or models to illustrate the philosophical doctrines of the Hellenistic schools, his works rather clearly show the influence of his own philosophical reflection upon both the politically dynamic and harrowing circumstances of the final days of the Roman Republic (for example, as documented in Long (1995a)) and the methods and beliefs of Academic philosophy (for example, as documented in Glucker (1988)). Although Cicero reports hundreds of philosophical claims from the Hellenistic schools, he regularly engages those claims philosophically (Powell

(1995b) provides a contextualized introduction to Cicero's philosophical works in general). Indeed, Cicero's philosophically ambitious program consists in his representation of the different doctrines of the Hellenistic schools in accord with the epistemological critiques of the New Academy, a project which he characterizes in the prologue to the second book of his *On Divination* (Schofield 2002: 99–103 provides a nuanced reading of the prologue).

Written in the last year of his life, Cicero's *On Divination* includes an "intellectual biography" which looks back upon and characterizes Cicero's unprecedented production of philosophical treatises following his exile from political office during Caesar's dictatorship, which was a profoundly transformative political event for Cicero (*De Div.* 2.6–7; *DND* 1.7; *De Off.* 2.2–5). In 46–44 BCE, Cicero produced nine different treatises (totaling almost 20 books or scrolls of dense philosophical prose). After describing his philosophical writings as a way to do good for his fellow Romans (even though he was no longer in public life) he describes his oeuvre as follows:

> In my *Academica* (in four books), I set forth the philosophical system which I thought least arrogant and at the same time most consistent and refined. And, since the foundation of philosophy rests on the distinction between good and evil, I exhaustively treated that subject in five books [in *On Moral Ends*] and in such a way that the conflicting views of the different philosophers might be known. Next, and in the same number of books, came the *Tusculan Disputations*, which made plain the means most essential to the happy life.… After publishing the works mentioned I finished three books *On the Nature of the Gods*, which contain a discussion of every question under that head. With a view of simplifying and extending the latter treatise I started to write the present volume *On Divination*, to which I plan to add a work *On Fate*; when that is done every phase of this particular branch of philosophy will be sufficiently discussed. To this list of works must be added the six books which I wrote while holding the helm of the state, entitled *On the Republic*—a weighty subject, appropriate for philosophical discussion.
>
> (*De Div.* 2.2–3)

Cicero clearly conceives his works as comprising the parts of logic, ethics, and natural science/metaphysics as a comprehensive treatment analogous to other Hellenistic schools, albeit with the addendum of political philosophy, which his *On the Republic* represents. Equally clear is his general embrace of the methodology of the New Academy, which he uses to structure most of the works written during the last two years of his life.

The methodological and epistemological tenets of the New Academy constitute a mitigated form of skepticism familiar (and ultimately derived) from the aporetic method found in some of Plato's Socratic dialogues (*Acad.* 1.15–17; *De Div.* 2.150; *De Rep*. 1.15–16). As Cicero describes it in the preface to the *Nature of the Gods*

> Our position is not that we hold that nothing is true, but that we assert that all true sensations are associated with false ones so closely resembling them that they contain no infallible mark to guide our judgement and assent. From this followed the corollary, that many sensations are probable [*multa esse probabilia*], that is, though not amounting to a full perception they are yet possessed of a certain distinctness and clearness, and so can serve to direct the conduct of the wise man.
>
> (*DND* 1.12; cf. *Acad.* 2.8; *Tusc.* 1.7–8, 1.17, 2.5, 4.7; *DND* 1.1, 1.11; *De Div.* 2.150)

Recognition of a "probable" sensation arises through the juxtaposition of opposing views on the same question or problem and throughout his "Academic" works, Cicero derives the opposing views on philosophical questions from the various Hellenistic schools. Cicero's Academic method thus entwines both philosophy and what today we would call the history of philosophy. Cicero provides us with numerous reports about the different philosophical beliefs current in the Hellenistic period, but he makes use of them philosophically to arrive at "probable" philosophical beliefs that the Academic philosopher can follow even if not assent to.

But even if Cicero incorporates the methods of the Academic school into the treatises written in the final years of his life, there is significant diversity amongst his works in the way that they make use of historical sources. The Academic model, for instance, is most prominent in *On Moral Ends* and *On the Nature of the Gods* (and its appendices, viz. *On Divination* and *On Fate*). In each of these works (which I will discuss further below), Cicero composes dialogues between a character who represents the views of one of the Hellenistic schools and a character (often that of "Cicero") who presents an Academic critique of the school's doctrines. Yet several important treatises, specifically *On the Republic* and *On Duties*, fail to follow the academic model even though they draw heavily upon (and thus present historical evidence about) the sources of Classical and Hellenistic philosophy. Whether Cicero's method of philosophical composition changed or his views about some aspects of practical philosophy departed from the Academic school are questions that go beyond my chapter. But the diversity of ways that Cicero incorporates historical sources into his philosophical works should caution us against the claim that his work lacks originality or simply present translations and adaptations of the major Greek schools of philosophy. In the remainder of my chapter I survey Cicero's actual use of historical sources in each of his philosophical treatises, proceeding chronologically (and identifying the conventional date of publication for each work).[2]

On the Republic [*De Re Publica*] (51 BCE)

Cicero's first substantive treatise, *On the Republic*, is quite explicitly inspired by Plato's *Republic*, which he views as a work about a just constitution rather than a just soul. Nonetheless, Cicero's *On the Republic* is incomplete: Although the treatise originally comprised six books, Books 4 and 5 exist almost entirely in fragments, and all of the other books suffer from significant lacunae.[3] But although Cicero's treatises are clearly indebted to Plato as a source, including significant translations of the *Republic*, which are inserted into *On the Republic* (*De Rep*. 1.66–67), the relationship between Cicero and Plato's works is more complicated. On the one hand, Cicero clearly incorporates Platonic themes into his dialogues. For instance, Book 6 of *On the Republic* includes the depiction of "Scipio's Dream," an account of the rewards of justice found in the afterlife, which echoes passages such as the account of the "cave" and the "Myth of Er" found in Plato's *Republic*. On the other hand, *On the Republic* Book 2 is an empirical and historical account of the origins and development of the Roman constitution; Cicero's account favorably contrasts both Rome's constitution and the historical study of constitutions to a "philosophical" analysis, which is how Cicero characterizes the utopian political philosophizing of Plato's *Republic* (*De Rep*. 2.21–22).

Cicero's *On the Republic* is a complicated source for other Hellenistic schools of philosophy. Although the prologue of *On the Republic* is fragmentary (*De Rep*. 1.1–12), it appears to offer a repudiation of the Epicurean doctrine that the wise person should live a life withdrawn from political activity (see further Christensen's chapter in this *Handbook*).

But much of Cicero's critique which has survived in the prologue is implicitly rather than explicitly aimed at Epicurean doctrines of withdrawal (*De Rep*. 1.3, 1.4). *On the Republic* also includes a debate (which survives only in fragmentary form in book three) on the relationship between justice and a commonwealth. Significant testimony evidence suggests that Cicero's critique of justice (put in the mouth of the character of Philus [*De Rep*. 3.8–28]) derives from the critique of justice made by the Academic philosopher Carneades. And yet Philus' critique of justice appears to be followed by two defenses of justice, one first made by the character of Laelius (*De Rep*. 3.33–41) and a second then made by the character of Scipio himself (*De Rep*. 3.42–48). The fragmentary nature of the text makes one wonder whether the debate on justice in *On the Republic* 3 represents the Academic Cicero, pointing out the inconclusive nature of practical philosophy (as, for instance, Zarecki (2014: 16–42) argues), or the quasi-Stoic or quasi-Peripatetic Cicero, who repudiates critiques of justice much like Plato's *Republic* repudiates Thrasymachus' critique of justice (as, for instance, Woolf (2015: 93–124) argues). Although clearly Cicero engages the debate about the validity of justice, the fragmentary nature of *On the Republic* under-determines its correct interpretation as an historical source for Academic philosophy.

On the Orator [*De Oratore*] (c. 53 BCE), *Brutus* (46 BCE), and *The Orator* (46 BCE)

Although contemporary philosophers tend to dismiss persuasive language as "mere rhetoric," as (Long 1995b: 38–39) notes, throughout his adult life Cicero remains consistent about "his interest as a writer in integrating philosophy with politics and rhetoric. That is the key to understanding his philosophical oeuvre as a whole, his philosophical sympathies, and much of his mind set." One is reminded that Socrates, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, was seriously concerned about the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric (*Phaedrus* 259e-274b) and in the prologue to *Tusculan Disputation*, Cicero likens himself to Aristotle (whom Cicero claims "joined philosophy and rhetoric" [*De Div.* 2.4]). He explains that

> it is my design not to lay aside my early devotion to the art of expression, but to employ it in this grander and more fruitful art: for it has ever been my conviction that philosophy in its finished form enjoys the power of treating the greatest problems with adequate fullness and in an attractive style.
>
> (*Tusc.* 1.7; cf. *De Off.* 1.3–4; *De Fat.* 3; *DND* 2.1, 2.168)

No doubt, an Academic philosopher interested in what is probable is open to the various ways that language can shape conviction and assent (cf. *Orator* 237–38) and Cicero's intellectual biography in *On Divination* identifies his rhetorical treatises as part of his philosophical oeuvre (*De Div.* 2.4). Rhetoric is much more than mere verbal adornment and Cicero's readers should appreciate that the variety of literary forms that he uses to convey his philosophy are in part "rhetorical" choices.

Cicero's three treatises on rhetoric self-consciously are organized into a trilogy that ultimately depicts the ideal orator. Cicero's *On the Orator* is meant to replace his earlier rhetorical treatise *On Invention* (written approximately 30 years earlier) and devotes an initial book to a dialogue between famous orators of Cicero's youth that examines the relationship between oration and general education; its second and third books examine the various subsections of oration (such as the different genera of rhetoric or the ornamentation of language), but often with an eye to what philosophy can teach the orator (*De Or.* 2.154–161, 3.56–68, 3.118–122, 3.142). Cicero's *Brutus*, by contrast, is a single book dialogue

that provides a history of rhetoric that begins by chronicling Greek oratory (25–52), but spends most of its time detailing Roman oratory since the founding of the Republic. The history in *Brutus* includes an account of philosophers learned in oratory (94–121) and an autobiography that chronicles Cicero's philosophical studies, including those with members of the Hellenistic schools (304–325). Finally, Cicero's *Orator*, which takes the literary form of a letter to Brutus, examines the question of the highest style of rhetoric and seeks to depict the orator as an unobtainable yet regulative ideal, which he likens to a Platonic Idea (7–8, 10). Perhaps most relevant to my chapter is the work's prologue (10–19), which examines the relationship between philosophy and oratory and includes Cicero's claim that "whatever ability I possess as an orator comes, not from the workshops of the rhetoricians, but from the spacious grounds of the Academy" (12). Among other topics of interest to contemporary philosophers, the treatise takes up the style appropriate to the genre of philosophy (61–8) and the philosophical education necessary for the ideal orator (113–122).

Academica (45 BCE)

Cicero's *Academica*, easily his most philosophically advanced and rigorous work, documents the epistemological arguments for and against the possibility of veridical apprehension of reality. The work is not only philosophically abstract, but as (Griffin 1997) documents, only two parts of it survived and those parts derive from significantly different 1st and 2nd editions of the treatise. The first edition of the work originally comprised two books, but Cicero revised the material into a second edition which comprised four books. Furthermore, the treatise has Cicero the author place major substantive arguments into the mouth of Cicero the character in the dialogue, a novel detail of the *Academica*, which immediately raises the question of whether the character of Cicero speaks for the author Cicero. Nonetheless, the surviving texts offer invaluable insights into epistemological debates both prior to and during Cicero's lifetime.

The second book of the 1st edition, named *Lucullus* after its main speaker, begins with a defense of the possibility of veridical apprehension. Although Lucullus the character represents the position of Antiochus, a somewhat renegade member of the Academy, Antiochus' epistemological views approximated those of the Stoic school of philosophy. Thus, the character of Lucullus articulates the fundamental tenets of Stoic epistemology, including an account of the underlying structure of experience, reason, and our senses, which make veridical apprehension possible (*Acad.* 2.19–29), and a defense of veridical apprehension grounded both in the Stoic account of physics (*Acad.* 2.30–31) and in counter-arguments against the Academic critique (*Acad.* 2.40–60). But in the second half of the book, Cicero the author puts into the mouth of Cicero the character Academic counter-arguments against the possibility of veridical apprehension. But before advancing the arguments for and against veridical apprehension, *Lucullus* contains an historical survey of how philosophers have understood the phenomenon of apprehension, beginning with Empedocles and running right up to epistemological views amongst Cicero's teachers (*Acad.* 2.14–18). The other surviving book of *Academica*, which derives from the 2nd edition, survives only in part, and is named after its main speaker Marcus Varro. Although the surviving text of *Varro* does not include a defense and critique of a specific epistemological belief, it does include Varro's historical account of the development of several of the most important Greek philosophical schools. It begins by distinguishing the views of the historical Socrates from that of Plato's (Old) Academy (*Acad.* 1.15–17), and then explains how the Peripatetic School and Stoicism developed out of departures from the Old Academy (*Acad.* 1.19–42). *Varro* contains fragments of the speech of the character of Cicero, which compares and

contrasts the differences between the Old and New Academies from a partisan perspective that claims that the New Academy more accurately captures the spirit of Socratic philosophizing (*Acad.* 1.44–46).

On Moral Ends [*De Finibus*] (45 BCE)

Cicero's most theoretical ethical treatise, which recently has received detailed philosophical commentary in (Annas and Betegh 2015), presents an Academic examination of the goal or end that constitutes happiness or well-being. The first two books are devoted to Epicureanism: The character of Torquatas presents a book-length defense of the Epicurean claim that pleasure is the goal of life and then the character of Cicero, representing the perspective of the New Academy, presents a book-length critique of Epicurean ethical philosophy. Books three and four follow the same pattern: the author Cicero puts into the mouth of the character of Cato a book-length defense of the Stoic claim that the honorable, understood as virtue, is the aim of life and then, once again, Cicero the character presents an Academic critique of Stoicism. Book five of *Moral Ends*, set in Athens, in the garden of Plato's Academy, concludes with an articulation and critique of the ethical philosophy of Antiochus. Although Antiochus identified with the New Academy in some respects, he sought to rejuvenate the ethical philosophy of the Old Academy. Cicero puts the articulation of Antiochus' ethical philosophy into the mouth of Piso, a follower of the New Academy, and puts into the mouth of Cicero, the character, a brief critique.

*On Moral End*s clearly exhibits similarities to Cicero's other Academic works insofar as it presents the views of Hellenistic schools and then subjects them to criticisms. But the work's presentation of different opinions from the schools is intertwined with their critique. Thus, Cicero the character presents an overview of the Epicurean system, ranging over its branches of logic, ethics, and theology or metaphysics (*De Fin*. 1.17–26); but he does so to present a critique of systematic deficiencies within Epicureanism, for instance that Epicurean physics are largely derivative from Democritus (*De Fin*. 1.17) or that Epicurean logic lacks any substantive place for definition or the methods of division and classification (*De Fin*. 1.22). Cicero the character also presents an overview of the Stoic system of philosophy, but largely on the grounds that he finds nothing new in Stoicism and that Stoicism is largely indistinguishable from Peripatetic philosophy (*De Fin*. 4.3–23). Cicero the author also puts into the mouth of the character Cato extensive justifications of the fundamental differences between Stoicism and the other schools (especially that of the New Academy (*De Fin*. 3.10–16, 3.30–50)). Can the modern historian of philosophy trust that the historical claims put into the mouths of any of these characters are historically accurate rather than polemical?

Consider, for instance, the account that *On Moral Ends* presents of the Epicurean view of friendship. In the articulation and defense of Epicureanism, the character of Torquatus anticipates the familiar objection that making pleasure the highest good leaves no place for friendship, since friendship requires loving another for his or her own sake rather than out of a sense of utility (*De Fin*. 1.65, 2.78). Thus, he notes that contemporary Epicureans hold that

> the early rounds of meeting and socializing, and the initial inclination to establish closeness, are to be accounted for by reference to our own pleasure, but that when the frequency of association has led to real intimacy, and produced a flower of affection, then at this point friends love each other for their own sake, regardless of any utility to be derived from the friendship.
>
> (*De Fin.* 1.69)

Cicero the author has Cicero the character reply that however laudable is such a development, it is absent from and foreign to Epicurus' own written account. Although *On Moral Ends* shows significant sensitivity to the source problem of Epicurean accounts of friendship (namely, whether and in what ways the doctrine had undergone development from the third to the first centuries BCE), such historical accuracy serves as the basis for the philosophical criticism of the doctrines of Epicurus (as distinct from the school of Epicureanism).

Tusculan Disputations [*Tusculanae Disputationes*] (45 BCE)

As Cicero notes in his intellectual biography, whereas *On Moral Ends* dealt with the goal or end at which a human life aims, his *Tusculan Disputations* (*Tusc*.) examine the "means" (*res*, or "things") most necessary to a happy life (*De Div.* 2.2). In five books, the treatise presents opposing arguments on five central debates in Hellenistic ethical theory: on whether death should be despised; on whether pain is the greatest evil; on whether the wise person experiences distress; on whether the wise person experiences the emotions of delight, lust, and fear; and on whether virtue is sufficient for living a happy life (a question also taken up in *Paradoxes* 16–19). Each "dispute" is structured in accord with the Academic methodology (which Cicero explicitly invokes) of opposing views against each other in search of probable rather than truthful conclusions, a method Cicero likens to the one used by Aristotle and Philo of Larissa (*Tusc*. 2.9; cf. *De Fat*. 1.4).

The structure of all five disputes is quite similar: after a brief prologue, a master and a student first present opposing views on a question; second, the master supplies relevant philosophical claims or theses, almost all of which are taken from classical and Hellenistic schools, to elucidate or resolve disagreement between opposing views; and third, the views are either confirmed or refuted based on the relevant philosophical claims. For example, the first dispute concerns the affirmation that "death is an evil" (*Tusc*. 1.9–15) and the negation "death is not an evil" (*Tusc*. 1.16–17). After presenting the two views, the master surveys the historical beliefs which philosophers have offered about the nature of death, beginning with Empedocles and running through classical philosophers like Plato and Aristotle and Hellenistic philosophers such as Dicaearchus and Zeno (*Tusc*. 1.18–25). The remainder of the dispute confirms that death is not an evil, first based on the belief that the soul is immortal (*Tusc*. 1.26–81) and secondly based on the belief that the soul is mortal (*Tusc*. 1.82–111).

Although Cicero is clearly using historical sources to advance philosophical arguments (for example, that death is not an evil), the incorporation of historical source material into the disputes provides a rich account of important subjects in pre-Socratic, classical, and Hellenistic philosophy. Thus, the second dispute, which concerns whether pain is the greatest evil, surveys the various accounts of pain, especially those found in the Epicurean school (*Tusc*. 2.15–31). Cicero also makes explicit that literary sources, such as Aeschylus and Homer, provide relevant source material about the nature of pain (*Tusc*. 2.26). The third and fourth disputes, which (Graver 2002) characterizes as a treatise on the nature of emotions, concern whether the wise man is susceptible to anxiety and other emotions. In the course of examining the dispute, Cicero the author surveys first the accounts of anxiety found in the Stoic, Peripatetic, Cyreneaic, and Epicurean schools (*Tusc*. 3.24–75); secondly, the analysis of delight, lust, and fear articulated in the Stoic school (*Tusc*. 4.10–33); and finally, the Peripatetic analysis of moderate emotions (*Tusc*. 4.34–57). The fifth dispute concerns whether virtue is sufficient for happiness, and surveys the axiology of Aristotle, Antiochus, and Epicurus (*Tusc*. 5.21–36). As (Gildenhard 2007) suggests, *Tusculan*

Disputations may initiate a new philosophical venture for Cicero, one concerned with the education of Romans as an alternative to political activity during Caesar's dictatorship. If such a thesis is correct, the master's invocation of philosophical beliefs to resolve ethical questions may seek historical accuracy rather than polemical advantage.

On the Nature of the Gods [*De Natura Deorum*] (45 BCE), *On Divination* [*De Divinatione*] (44 BCE), and *On Fate* [*De Fato*] (44 BCE)

Cicero's three inter-related treatises *On the Nature of the Gods* (*DND), On Divination* (*De Div.*), and *On Fate* (*De Fat.*) articulate and critique Epicurean and Stoic natural science, metaphysics, and theology. Indeed, the comprehensive "theology" of Stoicism includes not only an account of the gods, but topics such as cosmology, astronomy, zoology, teleology, and human anatomy. Stoic views of divination and fate also give rise to Cicero's separate treatment of the two subjects (*DND* 2.162–168; *De Div.* 2.3, 2.19–26, 2.148) as appendices of a sort to the main treatise. Although *On Fate* is fragmentary (it only includes the Academic critique of Stoic determinism), as (Schofield 1986) documents, all three works self-consciously embrace the Academic method of presenting opposing viewpoints on the same questions in order to evaluate the probability or likeliness of different historical positions (*DND* 1.1, 1.57, 2.2; *De Div.* 1.7, 2.8, 2.150; *De Fat.* 1). Indeed, *DND* 1.1 notes that the subject of theology is especially well-suited to Academic method, given that the complexity and subtlety of its argumentation generally undermine assent.

Although the Academic spokesperson of *DND*, Gaius Cotta, correctly notes that the Stoic account of the gods is far more detailed and complex than that of the Epicureans (*DND* 3.4), the three treatises together present an especially rich historical account of both schools, along with their predecessors such as the "Pre-Socratic" philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Peripatetic school. For example, Quintus, the Stoic spokesperson of *On Divination*, records that Chrysippus, Diogenes of Babylon, and Antipater all embraced the following argument:

> If there are gods and they do not make clear to man in advance what the future will be, then they do not love man; or, they themselves do not know what the future will be; or, they think that it is of no advantage to man to know what it will be; or, they think it inconsistent with their dignity to give forewarnings of the future; or, finally, they, though gods, cannot give intelligible signs of coming events.
>
> (*De Div.* 1.82)

But, based on the good characteristics of the gods, since each of these disjunctions is false, it follows that there must be divination. And, of course, the character of Cicero, presenting the Academic critique of Stoic divination, raises counterarguments and objections to each step of Quintus' reconstruction of the argument (*De Div.* 2.101–106). The result is a careful, nuanced exposition of a central argument in Stoicism, one which sheds much light on otherwise obscure doctrines.

Cicero's trilogy on theology also catalogs the diversity of opinions within the schools of Epicureanism and Stoicism. All three works regularly point out how Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Zeno, Panaetius, and Posidonius presented instances of heterodox or alternative views within the development of Stoicism (*DND* 2.13, 2.16, 2.57, 2.118). At the same time, Cicero the author shows that the accuracy of historical views is often conditioned by the allegiances of the spokesperson articulating them. For instance, in *DND* 1.25–43 the

Epicurean spokesperson, Gaius Velleius, presents a history of theological views that runs from Thales to Diogenes of Babylon, but he does so in order to show that prior to Epicurus, theological beliefs were "more like the dreams of madmen [*delirantium somnia*] than the considered opinions of philosophers" (*DND* 1.42). Elsewhere, although Cicero reports that the Academic philosopher Antiochus viewed the Stoic and Peripatetic schools as virtually indistinguishable, he has Lucilius Balbus, the Stoic spokesperson in *DND*, completely reject the Academic interpretation of their similarity (*DND* 1.16). Indeed, such a question reoccurs throughout Cicero's corpus and is a major point of disagreement between the Stoics and members of the Academy (e.g., *Tusc*. 5.119–121; *De Off*. 1.2, 1.6, 2.8; *De Fin*. 3.10–15, 4.3–6, 4.61–62). The trilogy of theological works thus exhibits Cicero the author documenting the historical views of his predecessors, but doing so within a framework that is fundamentally concerned with philosophizing about those views.

On Duties [*De Officiis*] (44 BCE)

Cicero's last substantive treatise, *On Duties*, introduces additional complexity to the question of Cicero's role in documenting the sources of Hellenistic philosophy alongside his own philosophical investigations and argumentation. Cicero is quite clear that *On Duties* is substantively indebted to a treatise written by the Stoic philosopher Panaetius of Rhodes (185–110 BCE) on the same subject (in Greek, περὶ τοῦ καθήκοντος) and to some extent he follows Panaetius and organizes his treatise into three books, one on what is honorable, one on what is beneficial, and one on apparent conflicts between the honorable and the beneficial (*De Off*. 1.9–10). But I say "to some extent" because Panaetius failed to write his projected third book (*De Off*. 3.7–11, 3.33–34); Cicero also faults Panaetius for failing to address the ranking of actions that are more or less beneficial or honorable (*De Off*. 1.152, 1.161, 2.88). Indeed, Cicero repeatedly criticizes Panaetius' views and faults him for neglecting important questions. Of the fourteen times that Cicero mentions Panaetius by name in the work, only two are positive and eight mentions are critical (*De Off*. 2.35, 2.51; 1.7, 1.9–10, 1.152, 1.161, 2.16, 2.88, 3.7–11, and 3.33–34). As Cicero puts it at one point, in a discussion of lavish expenditure,

> On account of Pompey, I am embarrassed to criticize theatres, colonnades and new temples; but the most learned men do not approve of them, as Panaetius himself says (whom I am to a large extent following, though not expounding, in these books [*quem multum in his libris secutus sum, non interpretatus*]).
>
> (*De Off.* 2.60; cf. 3.7)

No doubt, *On Duties* "adapts" Panaetius' works to a Latin audience by illustrating Stoic moral principles with Roman *exempla*. But Cicero's reflections on the moral laws of warfare (*De Off*. 1.34–40), his condemnation of the use of fear (like Caesar) to motivate citizenry (*De Off*. 2.23–29), or his application of Academic philosophy to the realm of ethics (*De Off*. 2.7–8) appear to be substantive philosophizing that goes far beyond his original Stoic source. The entire third book of *On Duties* is Cicero's substantive contribution since neither Panaetius nor his student Posidonius ever completed the projected third book (*De Off*. 3.7–8, 3.33–34).

Cicero's *On Duties* embraces Stoic and Peripatetic ethical doctrines, since it is only an ethical account based upon what is honorable [*honestum*] that can generate an account of duty (*De Off*. 3.6). Thus, unlike Cicero's other Academic treatises, *On Duties* contains almost no discussion of Epicureanism (aside from a brief concluding critique (*De Off*.

3.116–120)) nor does it include characters who represent the different Hellenistic schools. And yet Cicero's embrace of Stoicism also has its own limits. As Cicero notes at the outset of his treatise,

> I shall, therefore, for the present and on this question [namely, on the status of the honorable], follow the Stoics above all, not as an expositor [*non ut interpretes*], but, as is my custom, drawing from their fountains when as it seems best, using my own judgement and discretion [*iudicio arbitrioque*].
>
> (*De Off.* 1.6)

Thus, Cicero regularly inserts Peripatetic insights into the treatise on the grounds that there are minimal substantive ethical differences between the Stoic and Peripatetic schools. But further, the third book of the treatise documents at length divisions about the latitude of honorable actions in an extended imaginary dialogue between Diogenes of Babylon and his pupil Antipater (*De Off.* 3.51–57). Cicero's "Stoicism" is hardly dogmatic or slavishly concerned with historical accuracy and he has hardly abandoned his Academic allegiances (*De Off.* 1.8, 2.8, 3.20). But ultimately, I suspect that *On Duties* is just what it purports to be: a philosophically compelling account of right action suitable for specifically young Roman men, just like the work's addressee, Cicero's own son Marcus (*De Off.* 1.4, 3.121; cf. *De Div.* 2.4–5).[4]

Conclusion

My survey of Cicero's use of historical sources in his philosophical treatises suggests that one can identify three different models to characterize his use of Hellenistic sources. First, Cicero's *Academica* and *Tusculusan Disputations* draw upon historical sources primarily to orient and provide conceptual resources to philosophers analyzing complex problems. As Cicero notes, his method here appears to follow that of Aristotle (*Tusc.* 2.9) and whatever complications are involved in evaluating the endoxic surveys that commence many of Aristotle's investigations and treatises, it seems relatively non-controversial that Aristotle presents such views to facilitate the resolution of conceptual problems. Secondly, as we have seen in treatises like *On Moral Ends* and *On the Nature of the Gods*, Cicero sometimes depicts the historical opinions of the Hellenistic schools in a polemical or partisan fashion, namely in a way that fails to do justice to the richness or depth of the various Hellenistic school. Whether such distortions are meant to keep the school's spokesperson "in character" or are merely partisan depictions of other schools goes beyond my chapter. Indeed, based on a contrast between existing Epicurean texts (like the *Letter to Menoeceus* preserved in Diogenes Laertius [10.121–15]) and the depiction of Epicureanism in *On Moral Ends*, (MacKendrick 1989: 146) concludes that "Cicero is not a safe source for understanding Epicureanism, chiefly because he assumes a viciousness not inherent in the doctrine."

On Duties appears to provide a third model for how Cicero uses the historical views of the Hellenistic schools that consists in philosophizing "in the spirit" of one of the schools without being beholden to all its dogmas. In the same way that today one might characterize the ethical views of a contemporary philosopher as "Kantian" or "Aristotelian," it seems fair to say that in *On Duties* Cicero presents a "stoical" ethical philosophy, albeit one that is oriented by middle rather than perfect duties (*De Off.* 1.8, 2.7, 3.14) and overlaps with Peripatetic views about emotions and the place of virtue within the philosophy (*De Off.* 1.39, 2.8, 3.33). But as noted at the outset, although one can isolate instances of these three models of presenting historical sources in Cicero's works, in practice I suspect that Cicero uses all three models within all his treatises.[5]

Notes

1 See *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.6; *Brutus* 306; *Academics* 2.115, 1.14; *Tusculan Disputations* 2.61. In my chapter, I cite book and section references and hereafter abbreviate the titles of Cicero's major works, based on their Latin titles (see the list of abbreviations at the beginning of this volume). In general, my quotations are based on the Latin editions of Cicero's works in the Loeb Classical Library along with guidance of their various translations (listed in my bibliography). Additional editions I have consulted include (Annas 2001; Brittain, 2006; Griffin and Atkins, 1991; and Zetzel 2017). In his survey of the sources for the study of Hellenistic schools, (Mansfeld 2005: 6–8) leads with Cicero as one of the most important secondary sources. My chapter focuses on Cicero as a philosophical source in his treatises, but (McConnell 2014) documents philosophical sources in Cicero's ample correspondence.

2 My chapter focuses upon Cicero's works that correspond most closely with our contemporary notions of philosophy. But Cicero also wrote essays on aging and friendship that are certainly philosophical in Cicero's sense of the term (see further Lockwood 2019 for the case of *De Amicitia* or Nussbaum and Levmore 2017 for the case of *De Senectute*).

3 Cicero also composed a treatise *On the Laws* (*De Legibus*) which is modelled on Plato's *Laws*. Nonetheless, Cicero fails to identify the treatise either in his intellectual biography in *On Divination* or in his other writings and appears to have abandoned the work (see further Zetzel 2017: xxii–xxiv). Thus, I exclude discussion of Cicero's *On the Laws* from my chapter.

4 My brief survey of Cicero's *On Duties* has generally followed the interpretation of (Griffin and Atkins 1991), especially with respect to the goal of the work (see also Gildenhard 2017: 69–75). (Brunt 2013) presents a fundamentally different interpretation of *On Duties*, one which views Cicero as more concerned with transmitting the views of Panaetius with historical accuracy. There is no way I can do justice to these differences of interpretation in my short chapter.

5 I am grateful for Kelly Arenson's kind invitation to contribute to the Handbook. I am also grateful to Kelly, William H.F. Altman, and Michael Vazquez for written comments on an earlier draft of the paper.

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Further Reading

MacKendrick (1989) provides both detailed analyses of the philosophical arguments in each of Cicero's works and identification of his various sources (although he thinks sourcing Cicero's treatises has wrongly been the focus of scholars). Woolf (2015) provides a comprehensive treatment of Cicero's philosophical positions suitable for both advanced undergraduates and scholars working in the field of ancient philosophy. Rawson (1985) and Baraz (2012) provide studies of intellectual life in the final days of the Roman republic, when Cicero wrote his philosophical treatises.

PART II

Early Influences

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5

EPICUREANS, EARLIER ATOMISTS, AND CYRENAICS

Stefano Maso

The theory developed by Leucippus (5th century BCE), Democritus (470/460–380 BCE), and later Epicurus (341–271/270 BCE) and his school is commonly defined as atomistic materialism. According to this theory, matter is the fundamental principle of existent and ever-evolving reality, and it is constituted of atoms. But whereas for the first atomists atoms were not so much a substance [*ousia*] as an ideal form [*idea*] through which they could explain sensible bodies and their movement, with Epicurus atoms effectively turned into a substance.[1] From a mathematical theory[2] we come to a physical conception.

Physics and Epistemology

Atomist philosophers conceive of atoms as small entities [*mikrai ousiai*], uncuttable [*atoma*] and indestructible because they are compact [*nastai*] and infinite [*apeira*] in number (LM 27D29, D32).[3] The void [*kenos*] is an alternative and complementary concept, providing a place [*topos*] where atoms move incessantly, combine and separate to constitute mutable matter.

The existence of the void as an intangible and empty place is a purely logical deduction of atomic theory, since atoms could not otherwise move (*DRN* 1.334–345; LS 6A). According to Aristotle, atomists describe the void as nothingness [*ouden*], as an absence of matter that is without limit [*apeiron*] (*Metaph.*, 985b4–20, LM 27D31[4]). What is ultimately at work here is an engagement with Parmenides, for whom "being is, [and] nothing is not" (LM 19D7 = DK B6): since, for atomists, from a perspective that at first sight appears contradictory, both "being" and "nothing" exist. We can only overcome this contradiction if being is thought of not simply as the opposite of nothing (as Parmenides maintained), but as a multiplicity of atoms that, *in order to exist as atoms* (i.e. with their distinct individuality), must presuppose the existence (and not the non-existence) of emptiness.

Democritus and his teacher Leucippus contribute some important and decisive perspectives[5]: a) that atoms have infinite forms, dimensions and positions; b) that they continually move and collide; c) that they only occasionally remain connected to one another because of their particular structure [*epallagai*] and therefore they remain arranged in a certain casual order [*diathêgê*]. Unfortunately, according to this conception of atoms, Democritus could only ascertain the existence of movement and change, but could not correctly explain them because he could not explain the existence of immobility. If all atoms move (as

follows from the vortex theory[6]) and have no size limit, how is it possible to explain that a certain thing, for example a stone placed on the ground, does not move? Just like the sun, the stone, according to Democritus, corresponds to one atom and, evidently, we see it does not move. Only when I grasp and I move or lift it, then we can say that the stone moves; but before, where was its movement? Similarly, how can a small flower grow and perhaps change color, since it can be considered a single atom?

About a century later, Epicurus reasserted that an atom cannot be cut up into an infinite number of other atoms for reasons connected with the conservation of matter (*Ep. Hdt.* 42).[7] He also limits the size of the atom, affirming that it cannot be detected by the human eye.[8] Human beings thus perceive, not atoms (as the ancient Atomists thought) but atomic compounds (*sunkriseis* or *athroisma, Ep. Hdt.* 62). A stone (like the sun) is a compound, which even when immobile, is composed of constantly moving atoms. A flower is also a compound of atoms, its growth and change depending on the variation of the number and the type of its constituting atoms. It thus becomes necessary to explain the origin of movement in order to show why atoms (which are indivisible and irreducible, *atoma ametablêta*) come together to form the non-durable compounds that we commonly perceive (*Ep. Hdt.* 41–44, LS 8A). Epicurus uses "weight" [*baros*], explaining that because atoms have weight (and because there is emptiness) they naturally fall. This "fall" is conceived in the most abstract possible way as a falling through absolute emptiness and, as such, is not conditioned by any other thing. Atoms—whatever their conformation, size or weight—thus fall in the same way and at the same velocity (as Galileo Galilei was to theorize and demonstrate almost two thousand years later, in relation to the fall of "bodies" into the void), without ever landing on one another (*DRN* 2.235–242). If these were the only conditions at play, the fall would always have the same speed [*istachôs*] and would be eternally straight, and resulting in none of the collisions, rebounds and processes of aggregation that Leucippus and Democritus had taken for granted. Hence Epicurus' need to place a new condition on his atomic theory: each atom has the possibility of swerving, at random and unpredictable times and places:

> On this topic, another thing I want you to know is this. When bodies are being borne by their own weight straight down through the void, at quite uncertain times and places they veer a little from their course, just enough to be called a change of motion. If they did not have this tendency to swerve, everything would be falling downward like raindrops through the depth of the void, and collisions and impacts among the primary bodies would not have arisen, with the result that nature would never have created anything.
>
> (*DRN* 2.216–224, LS 11H)

Like the indivisibility, shape, and number of atoms, weight and the swerve (*clinamen*, see *DRN* 2–292; *parenklisis*, see Aëtius 1.23.4 = fr. 280 Us.) are required as causal conditions to explain becoming. Without the idea of weight, Democritus cannot justify why the atom "falls" or moves. Without the swerve, he cannot explain why clashes and aggregations occur—since all the atoms fall in the same way.

We obtain confirmation of the step forward made by Epicurus with respect to Democritus from a late text by the Epicurean Diogenes of Oinoanda (2nd-3rd CE). In fr. 54, II 3 - III 4 Smith, it is evident we are dealing with "free movement" [*eleutheran keinêsin*], i.e. one not bound to other previous movements or collisions, a notion introduced in order to avoid the possible fatalistic consequences of Democritean doctrine in which every clash and aggregation of atoms was mechanically determined. The ancient atomists believed precisely that

atoms were whirling around, generating all existing compounds, and that this vortical motion could be called "necessity" (DK 68A1.44–45 = 4.1; Leszl 81.3). In other words, Epicurus' notion of the *clinamen* (swerve) makes it not only possible for atoms to collide and form aggregates, but also for this aggregation to be a chance occurrence rather than a predetermined event. Epicurus' introduction of the swerve thus has a further philosophical implication, helping establish the relation between indeterminism and free will[9].

Epicurus makes another important point. While surviving documentation on the first atomists completely does not mention the relationship between the physical elements and perception by a sensing subject, sensation [*aisthêsis*] is at the heart of Epicurean physics and epistemology.[10] In the clash between atomic compounds we may observe both active outcomes (A hits B, which is hit) and passive ones (B is hit by A, which hits it), which have evident consequences insofar as they alter the structure of such compounds. These outcomes and changes have a crucial epistemological implication: "sensation," which according to Sextus Empiricus is always evident (*M* 7.216) and constitutes the basis of all cognition, brings about our "understanding" of what occurs. "Sensation" becomes the most evident [*enargês*] "criterion of truth," which is crucial for truly knowing what occurs (KD 23 and 24 = LS 16D and 17B). A further difficulty arises, however: who is the sensing subject, according to Democritus? Unfortunately, no fragment has come down to us on this topic.[11] Yet it is this point that allows us to justify the ethical doctrine proposed by atomism.

Epicurus (*Ep. Hdt.* 38 = LS 17C), as is known, defines the sensing subject as one who, through an "act of direct apprehension" [*epibolê*], can "receive" sensations and affections [*pathê*]. This is a key point in Epicurean doctrine, because only compounds of a certain kind, namely animate ones, are capable of practising *epibolê*. We must assume that even in Democritus different levels of atoms were distinguished (for example, Democritus conceives the existence of the gods). Only in this way is the human being justified as a particular unity, as a sensing subject capable of knowing and acting, allowing for ethics to be founded on materialistic physics. The sentient subject can thus identify the *telos* of his life, which for Democritus is *euthymia*, a state in which the soul proceeds peacefully and in a well settled state [*eustathôs*], undisturbed by fear, superstition or any other passion (DL 9.45)[12].

Ethics and Psychology

Sense-perception [*aisthêsis*] lies not only at the heart of Epicurean physics and epistemology, but it is also the focus of the Epicureans' marked concern with ethics. Sensation is always accompanied by the experience of pleasure or pain. Therefore, compared to sensation, the sensing subject (i.e. that compound capable of consciously 'experiencing' pleasure and pain) will endeavor to, either instinctively or rationally, obtain what best suits its nature—and to avoid the opposite. In practice, the ultimate goal [*telos*] for animals, human beings and gods is to obtain what enables them to remain what they are, which is to say, to remain alive. According to Epicurus this is happiness, technically the *katastematic pleasure*: the well-established condition or state of the body in which pleasure does not change (*On the Goal,* fr. 22.3 Arrighetti).

The concept of sensation had also been crucial for the Cyrenaics.[13] The Cyrenaic school had developed in only five generations of masters, between the fifth century (its founder, Aristippus of Cyrene, 430–350, had been a disciple of Socrates) and the third century BCE (the last representatives include: Aristotle of Cyrene and Hegesias of Cyrene; see DL 2.85–86). We also know of a number of small groups, including the followers of Anniceris,

Hegesias, and Theodoretus, which formed in and endured through the third and second centuries. According to one of its leading exponents, Aristippus the Younger, the founder's grandson, we only have the perception [*aisthêsis*] of feelings [*pathê*] (Euseb., *PE* 14.18.32 = Giannantoni IVB5).

This suggests a possible physical interpretation of the doctrine, but also points to a subjective psychological experience. We have only two feelings (the feeling of pleasure and that of pain), corresponding to two types of movement: a smooth movement, pleasure, and a rough movement, pain (DL 2.86–87 = Giannantoni IVA172). Furthermore, we must not forget that what is experienced and gives pleasure or pain can be both physical and mental.

Significantly, the Cyrenaics believe bodily pains to be worse than mental ones; by contrast, Epicurus holds mental pains to be worse, since the flesh is storm-tossed only in the present, but the soul in past, present and future (DL 10.137). For the same reason, Epicurus—again in opposition to the Cyrenaics—maintains that the pleasures of the soul are greater than those of the body. As we can see, Epicureanism developed a psychological (and hence ethical) theory starting from a physical one; and it did so quite naturally, precisely because both these theories rest on the same materialistic foundations.

Moving on with our comparison between the Cyrenaic doctrine and the Epicurean one, it is worth noting that within Epicureanism an analytical investigation is conducted into the nature of desire (and hence the issue of what desires can legitimately be pursued). Epicurus seeks to determine what can actually be regarded as "pleasure," and he does so in a way that clearly distances him from the Cyrenaics, who thought that pleasure was good anyway, even when it was the result of shameful actions: "Pleasure is good even when it comes from shameful facts; … because even if the action is absurd, yet pleasure is in itself desirable and is good" (DL 2.88 = Giannantoni IVA172). Epicurus and his followers draw upon Democritus' assertion that moderation [*metriotēs*] in enjoyment and equilibrium [*summetria*] in life are the bases for wellbeing.[14]

As far as desire is concerned, Epicurus distinguishes natural and necessary desires, natural but non-necessary desires, and neither natural nor necessary desires. The first are those desires which bring relief from pain, such as drinking when thirsty; the second are those which merely vary pleasure but do not remove pain, such as the desire for expensive foods, or exotic wines, or sex; finally, neither natural nor necessary are ones for things like crowns and the erection of statues (*KD* 29 and *De Ab.* 1.51–52; cf. LS 21I-J). Lucretius reminds us that:

> hot fevers do not leave the body more swiftly if you toss on embroidered tapestries and shimmering purple than if you have to lie on common drapery. Therefore, since riches are of no benefit in our body, nor social class nor a kingdom's glory, we should further suppose that they are of not benefit to the mind as well.
>
> (*DRN* 2.34–39)

It is crucial to note that natural but non-necessary desires are based on the *varying* of the perceptual experience.

These various forms of desire are precisely what enable Epicurus to develop a conception of pleasure that distinguishes between kinetic pleasure [*kata kinêsin hêdonê*] and static or katastematic pleasure [*katastêmatikê hêdonê*]. The kind of pleasure that varies constitutes the explicit foundation of Cyrenaic thought: Cyrenaics do not admit katastematic pleasure. By contrast, Epicurus accepts both kinds of pleasure and assures his readers that freedom from disturbance [*ataraxia*] and absence of pain [*aponia*] are static pleasure; but joy [*chara*] and delight [*euphrosunê*] are regarded as kinetic activities (DL 10.137).

It seems as though the unbridled physical enjoyment of pleasure constitutes the heart of the Cyrenaics' hedonistic ethics. The pursuit of pleasure thus translates, in their view, into the experiencing of a pleasure that varies in terms of both quality and intensity. The corollary to this is that, precisely because there is no limit to the quality and intensity of pleasure, the pleasure of the Cyrenaics proves disappointing, since it endlessly defers the possibility of satisfaction.

According to the Cyrenaics, we can distinguish three states: one in which we are in pain, and which is like a storm at sea; a second one in which we experience pleasure, and which is like a gentle swell—for pleasure is a smooth movement; and a third, intermediate state in which we feel neither pain nor pleasure, and which is like a flat calm (*PE* 14.18.32 = Giannantoni IVB5). Man seems to perceive these three states alone; moreover, from the Cyrenaics' perspective, it is pointless to carry the enquiry any further, for example by searching for the cause of these different states.

By contrast—and evidently in polemical opposition to the Cyrenaics[15]—the Epicureans believe that pleasure is pleasure, and pain is pain and that there can be no intermediate state between them. Pleasure is found where there is and for as long as there is no pain, just as pain is found where there is no pleasure and as long as there is no pleasure: the removal of all pain is the limit of the magnitude of pleasures (*KD* 3–4; LS 21C). Moreover, every pleasure *qua* pleasure is good, and every pain *qua* pain is bad (*Ep. Men.* 129; LS 21B3).[16]

But how is it possible to deny the existence of an intermediate state, a state that everyday human experience seems to entail? Why does Epicurus choose to go down this route?

We can try to answer by relying on the interpretation Cicero gives us of the controversy between Democritus, Cyrenaics and Epicureans.[17] While this interpretation clearly derives from doxographical contributions, there is no doubt it reflects a historical and persistent rivalry between the different schools.

Cicero—a critical yet attentive reader of Epicurean texts—tackles the issue we have posed directly, especially in Book 2 of *De finibus* and Book 3 of the *Tusculanae disputationes*.[18] First of all, Cicero believes that Epicurus contradicts himself, because in his view the philosopher believes not so much that the absence of pain can accompany the absence of pleasure, but rather that pleasure and the absence of pain *de facto* coincide, constituting a sort of analgesic hedonism (cf. *Tusc.* 3.47 = *KD* 18). Therefore, the ultimate good would simultaneously coincide with the absence of pain and the highest degree of pleasure. Furthermore, Cicero emphasizes that, in his approach to ethics, Epicurus has separated the highest good (which coincides with pleasure) from virtue. In doing so, he has created an unbridgeable gulf between the physical and the spiritual dimension. Cicero's ultimate thesis is the diametric opposite: "Pleasure is one thing, absence from suffering quite another [*aliud est voluptas, aliud non dolere*]."[19] In other words, suffering is the opposite of its own absence, and not the opposite of pleasure (*De Fin.* 2.28). Cicero here is adopting the thesis of Hieronymus of Rhodes, the Peripatetic philosopher (third century BCE), according to whom the experience of pleasure and the absence of pain are two different things (*De Fin*. 2.9). To avoid possible misunderstandings, Cicero introduces an example: he asks whether the pleasure we feel when drinking is the same as that which we experience after having quenched our thirst. The answer is very important: according to Torquatus (the champion of the Epicurean thesis in Cicero's dialogue), once our thirst has been quenched, we enjoy a *stable pleasure*; whereas during the actual act of quenching our thirst we experience an *unstable pleasure,* i.e. a *pleasure in movement* (*De Fin.* 2.9–10). However, this means assigning the same name, *pleasure*, to two different kinds of pleasure; and, according to Cicero, this is incorrect, as is the notion of "variation" [*varietas*] when it is introduced to deny the radical difference between *stable pleasure* and *kinetic pleasure*. It

is untenable to argue that *kinetic pleasure* (i.e. pleasure that "varies") must be added to and coincide with *stable pleasure*, which "does not vary" (i.e. "absence from suffering"). According to Cicero, Epicurus' theory resembles an attempt to combine Hieronymus' theory with that of the Cyrenaic Aristippus (*De Fin.* 2.19)—an absurdity.

By contrast, precisely the connection between "stability" and "perception" is key to explaining the reason the Epicureans theorized the absoluteness of "katastematic pleasure," namely the kind of pleasure that does not vary. Epicurus himself would appear to have been the first to draw a distinction between the two kinds of pleasure (DL 10.136 = LS 21R), by emphasizing that only the former is perfect and lasting, whereas the latter is temporary. The instability of kinetic pleasure, and its reduction to a mere physical condition to be brought back to stability (which is to say, to katastematic pleasure), is the key to understanding the Epicurean position. Reason is what brings this "reduction" about: it rests on the realization that variation—which constitutes kinetic pleasure—is actually entirely superfluous, given that any experience of freedom from pain coincides with the highest good: "pleasure exists everywhere, and for the entire time it lasts, there is no suffering either of body or of mind or both" (*KD* 3). This implies that the intermediate state—the one which, according to Hieronymus and Cicero, makes the *absence of pain* different from the *presence of pleasure*, even though the two may go hand in hand—is meaningless, which is why Epicurus rejects it.

It may be noted that the ancient atomists did not distinguish between the two kinds of pleasure. Rather, Democritus observed that the ultimate goal which man must set himself is contentment [*euthymia*]: only by finding satisfaction in what we have and what is proper to our nature, and by appreciating what befalls us, can we attain safety and absence of apprehension [*athambia*], and well-being (Stobaeus, *Anthology* 3.1.210, LM 27D226–231 = DK 68B3, 189, 191; A1, 167, 169. See 133.1–4, 152.1–4, 139.1, 137.1 Leszl). "Contentment" seems to foreshadow katastematic pleasure, insofar as it consists in the capacity to limit desire and pleasure. We can ask if a specific connotation distinguishes the denominations with which Clement of Alexandria[20] labels the ultimate end [*telos*] that Democritus' successors identified. And whereas Democritus identifies *telos* with *euthymia* or *euestô* (contentment and feeling good), Nausyphanes (Epicurus' teacher) uses the word *akataplêxia* (absence of fright). But according to Clement, the *akataplêxia* of Nausyphanes corresponds to the *athambia* (absence of apprehension) attributed to Democritus. Furthermore, Anaxarchus of Abdera, one of the first followers of Democritus, proposed the *apatheia* (the absence of passions) and the *adiaphoria* (the indifference to external things) as means to reach the *eudaimonia* (happiness). However, it is evident that only Democritus defines *telos* (the ultimate end/the purpose) positively: all the other words are qualified by the presence of the "privative alpha"—a prefix meant to indicate the negation of a word—and seem to allude to happiness as the result of a process of "reduction" in the human psycho-physical experience, the exact process that can also be recognized in the way Epicurus conceives of katastematic pleasure.

The Cyrenaics' interpretation of pleasure leads them instead to acknowledge the distinction between the two kinds of pleasure. However, this theory denies that it is *de facto* possible to grant katastematic pleasure. Given the varied and successive way in which we experience pleasures, we can grasp only kinetic pleasure or katastematic pleasure, either successively or not at all, and any increase in pleasure is kinetic.

Unlike that of the Cyrenaics, Epicurus and Lucretius's interpretation is intended as a renewed version of Democritus' position. By introducing a distinction between two different kinds of pleasure, the Epicureans also reach another remarkable conclusion: the idea that contentment is already a katastematic pleasure in itself. Clearly, it is possible to grasp

different facets of such pleasure, which present themselves as *varietas* and hence as kinetic pleasure. Epicurus and Lucretius are aware that it is the task of reason to process this *varied* sensory experience, in such a way that each specific detail may be positively appreciated and grasped in the most pregnant possible way [*katapuknôsis*]. Epicurus gives great weight to cogitation [*logismos* and *phronesis*] and, ultimately, reason (which is to say the mind, *psuchê*), demanding that they be capable of grasping and focusing on the pleasurable aspects of life, so that negative ones may be considered absent (and be *de facto* eliminated). But if the physical side of the experience of pleasure constitutes the point of departure, the point of arrival is the rational processing of this experience. In *The Letter to Menoeceus* (129–130 = LS 21B3) Epicurus writes:

> Every pleasure, because of its natural affinity, is something good, yet not every pleasure is choiceworthy. Correspondingly, every pain is something bad, but not every pain is by nature to be avoided. However, we have to make our judgment on all these points by a calculation and survey of advantages and disadvantages. For at certain times we treat the good as bad and conversely the bad as good.

Consequently, Epicurus—opposing the Cyrenaics—can argue that, even in the apparently most painful moments, the wise man is capable of being happy: for, if needs be, he knows how to concentrate on the sheer fact of being alive. At this point, "being alive" may be seen to coincide with katastematic pleasure. Epicurus states as much in a letter to his mother: "When we are alive, we experience a joy akin to that of the gods" (*PHerc.* 176 5 X Vogliano = fr. 72.38–40 Arrighetti). Even his spiritual testament, which is to say the letter addressed to his friend Idomeneus and transmitted by Diogenes Laertius, bears witness to this. The philosopher maintains that the day in which he is dying is a blessed one, even though his bladder and bowl pains could hardly be more intense (*Letter to Idomeneus* = DL 10.22).

Aristippus' Hedonic Presentism and Epicurus' Doctrine of Limits

According to the Cyrenaic Aristippus, pleasure persists and has value only as long as we are experiencing it. His grandson, Aristippus the Younger, thinks that a "unitemporal"[21] present pleasure constitutes *de facto* the happiness that every man must propose to himself as an end. No doubt that this experience of pleasure is, moreover, an essentially physical experience. We observe that there is a strong emphasis on the physical dimension and the instantaneousness of the perception of pleasure;[22] it is a real limitation that aims to capture only the most obvious character of pleasure: intensity. The Cyrenaics renounce the lasting experience of pleasure because their focus is the intensity of the instant in which man experiences pleasure. The Cyrenaics focus on the search for an ever more intense and varied experience of pleasure in order to guarantee the intensity of the present perception and avoid the distraction involved in waiting for an uncertain future. Kinetic pleasure is the actual limit of the Cyrenaic ethics.

By contrast, it is important to understand the ethical basis of Epicurus' doctrine, and, in particular, its therapeutic proposal. Every Epicurean master and every reader of Epicurean texts considers the "fourfold cure" [*tetrapharmakos*] a crucial element in Epicurean doctrine. Lucretius himself,[23] while not directly referring to this doctrine, no doubt bore it in mind when composing his poem. Cicero[24] explicitly mentions the *Key Doctrines* in which Epicurus summed it up. Even Philodemus of Gadara explicitly mentions the theory.[25] Epicurus pithily expressed it as follows: "Were we not upset by the worries that celestial

phenomena and death might matter to us, and also by failure to appreciate the limits of pains and desires, we would have no need for natural philosophy" (*KD* 11 = LS 25.B.11; cfr. *KD* 1–4, 10, 20, and *Ep. Men.* 133).

It is interesting to note that the *tetrapharmakos* also rests on a doctrine of the "limit"; this time, however, in an Epicurean version. This doctrine applies to everything that exists and is perceived within the cosmos.[26] Take atoms: we have isolated atoms that eternally fall and never combine with others; but we also have atoms that combine into endless, more or less changeable structures. The gods constitute the ultimate "limit" of this changeability, for they are *eternally stable* atomic compounds. They never change because, by definition, they are intangible: they never collide with other atoms or other compounds. Take death: by definition, it never has anything to do with life. It constitutes the "limit" of life. Take pain and, in parallel, pleasure: each constitutes the other's "limit."

Based on this doctrine of the "limit," Epicurus infers that we must not fear the gods, because they are imperturbable and, hence, take no interest in us or interfere with other atomic compounds (*Ep. Men.* 123–124). We must not fear death, because when it exists, we do not; and as long as we are alive, we cannot perceive it (*Ep. Men.* 124–127).[27] We must not fear pain, because it may be more or less intense: if it is light, it is so easily endurable that at its limit it can be perceived as pleasure; if it is extreme, a loss of sensibility occurs and we no longer feel it (*KD* 4). Finally, we must not fear pleasure, in the sense that we must not fear the *dissatisfaction* that affects those who give themselves over to the pursuit of the most intense and prolonged sort of kinetic pleasure, as did the Cyrenaics, for kinetic pleasure finds its limit in katastematic pleasure (*Ep. Men.* 131–132).

This is exactly the opposite of what the Cyrenaics claim. Although both consider the "limit" as an inevitable psychophysical border, the experience of the limit leads the Cyrenaics to renounce katastematic pleasure, denying its reason; on the contrary, it leads Epicurus and the Epicureans to re-evaluate katastematic pleasure by reconsidering kinetic pleasure as an irrelevant variable.

Destiny and Humans

According to the fragmentary texts we possess, Democritus does not appear to have built a theology. He was only concerned with explaining the causes of belief in the gods' existence. Very probably this belief must be traced back to the observation of great natural phenomena and to the flow of *eidôla* (images) emanating from objects and reaching men (*M* IX 24 and 19 = LM 27D207 and 154 = 112.1 Leszl = DK 68B166). Democritus says:

a When the men of old time saw what was happening in the heavens, such as thunder and lightning, and thunderbolts and collisions between stars, and eclipses of sun and moon, they were affrighted, imagining the Gods to be the causes of these things.

b Certain images impinge on men, and of these some are beneficial, others maleficent (whence also he prayed that he might have "propitious images"), and these images are great and gigantic; they are difficult to destroy without, however, being indestructible, and they signify the future to men beforehand, as they are the object of vision and emit sounds. Hence the ancients, on receiving a presentation of these images, supposed that God exists, God being none other than these images, and possessed of an indestructible nature.

Moreover, Democritus condemns the prayers that men address to the gods, because he considers it a foolish practice of those who are not able to get what they need (Stobaeus,

Anthology 3.18.30 = DK 68B234 = Leszl 136.2). As for the origin of the cosmos, Democritus excludes any contribution of the divinity and envisages that the cosmogonic process is a consequence of nature and chance.

But all this does not imply that Democritus was really an atheist.[28] In consonance with Homer, we can deduce from some fragments or evidence that Democritus imagined the gods according to an anthropomorphic perspective: the god is a kind of living mortal endowed with great intelligence, capable of helping men. Obviously, this living mortal would be an aggregate of atoms capable of emanating *eidôla*:

> It is not worth believing in Democritus: he explains what is less difficult with what is more difficult. Nature offers us many and various ideas to clarify why men had a notion of gods. But it is completely unacceptable that, in the environment around us, there are exceptionally large images with human forms, and, in general, fictions of the kind that Democritus wanted to invent.
>
> (*M* IX 42 (112.2 Leszl))

While not all scholars agree that Leucippus and Democritus were atheists,[29] it is widely accepted that the Epicurean school took some great steps forward in the direction of the autonomy of the human subject vis-à-vis destiny and the influence of fate. In the conclusion to his *Letter to Menoeceus*, 133–134 (LS 20A), Epicurus writes:

> Whom, after all, do you consider superior to the man who … would deride "fate" which some introduce as overlord of everything, but sees that some are necessitated [*kat'anankên*], others are due to fortune [*apo tuchês*], and others depend on us [*par'hêmas*], since necessity is accountable to no one, and fortune is an unstable thing to watch, while that which depends on us, with which culpability and its opposite are naturally associated, is free of any overlord [*adespoton*]? For it would better to follow the mythology about gods than be a slave to the "fate" [*heimarmenê*] of the natural philosophers: the former at least hints at the hope of begging the gods off by means of worship, whereas the latter involves an inexorable necessity.[30]

According to Epicurus, the wise man is above destiny because the latter does not rule everything, meaning that not all events are the consequence of an unalterable causal chain. Certainly, the chain of events plays a significant role in the mechanistic development of becoming (as Democritus had already thought) and takes the form of necessity [*kat'anankên*]. However, on the one hand, we cannot rule out the influence of causality [*apo tuchês*], which is clearly connected to the causal collision of atoms and atomic compounds. On the other hand, we must grant human subjects an autonomous role: each man can determine his own actions independently of any causal chain—which is to say, in accordance with his own will [*par'hêmas*].

Since Epicurus firmly believes that, by their very nature, the gods are unconcerned with events within the cosmos and ones affecting human beings, he has no trouble admitting their existence or even accepting mythical tales about them. If such myths were to foster a pious hope that the gods actually play some kind of role and can interfere in human life, there would be no psychological drawback to this; it would merely amount to an illusion incompatible with the theoretical model behind atomistic physics: an illusion that would limit man's role and his responsibility in life, while confirming a degree of autonomous decision-making. Besides, the alternative path, which leads to a belief in the absolute power

of destiny, is equally incompatible with this model. In this case, no divergence with respect to what is predetermined and necessitated would be admissible, thereby ruling out any responsibility on man's part.

Consequently, the only real option compatible with the atomistic model is the one that posits the existence of free will and entails responsibility with respect to one's choices. These will be autonomous choices, independent not just of destiny [*heimarmenê*], but also of fortune [*tuchê*]. Significantly, Epicurus concludes that it is better to be wise and unlucky than foolish and lucky.

As we can see, Epicurean doctrine explicitly entails the need for each human being to take responsibility for his own life and the choices he must make. While this was not yet evident to the ancient atomists (Democritus or Nausyphanes, fourth cent. BCE), the later Epicurus' followers—such as Polystratus (third cent. BCE), Lucretius and Philodemus (first cent. BCE), and Diogenes of Oenoanda (third cent. CE)—never questioned the validity of this conclusion.[31]

Conclusions

Thanks to Epicurus the physical theory of the ancient atomists received a solid refinement: in particular the introduction of the atom's *weight* and the *swerve* allowed him to explain the aggregation of the atoms and the consequences of their clashing. This upgrade justifies the transformation of the aggregates and the *experience* of the clash suffered by the sensitive aggregates (i.e. by the animated ones). "Sensation" [*aisthêsis*] is this *experience*; it produces knowledge and, together, involves the distinction between what produces pleasure and what produces pain.

The Cyrenaics in particular concentrated on pleasure and assumed it as an absolutely valid experience, to be intensified, to vary continuously (*kinetic* pleasure). Epicurus, on the other hand, saw the limit of this tension towards pleasure (e.g. lack of satisfaction) and proposed a constant type of pleasure [*katastematic*]. Natural desires, moderated by reason, appear to be essential. In this way Epicurus referred to the moral goal that Democritus had already set himself: contentment and feeling good [*euthumia*]. Instead, the pleasure of Aristippus, the Cyrenaic, is linked to the "instant" and therefore is a "unitemporal" present pleasure.

Epicurus also made great steps forward regarding the questions of destiny and the autonomy of human action. While Democritus gave the causal chain of events after the original casual collisions a significant role in the mechanistic development of becoming, taking the form of necessity, Epicurus guarantees human subjects an autonomous role. As for the gods: both Democritus and Epicurus call them aggregates of atoms. For Epicurus they have no contact with humans, while Democritus claims it is foolish to address prayers to them. As for the origin of the cosmos, Democritus excludes any contribution of the divinity and envisages that the cosmogonic process is a consequence of nature and chance.

Notes

1 We owe this explanation to Alfieri 1979. In the light of it, we can understand how atomistic thought developed in contrast to the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle. As regards the primary sources, see Leszl 2009: 78–84.

2 It is said that Leucippus was probably a pupil of Zeno of Elea (DK 67A1), who was well known for paradoxes suggesting that motion is impossible because a spatial magnitude can be divided into an infinite number of parts, each of which must be traversed, before reaching the next one.

3 LM = Laks - Most 2016. For the texts of Epicurus, see Arrighetti 1973. For the texts of Leucippus and Democritus, see Leszl 2009; for Cyrenaics, see Giannantoni 1990.
4 Cf. Arist., *Gen. Corr.* 324b35–325a3; 325a23-b5 (LM 27D30); Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's De Caelo,* p. 294.33–295.22 (LM 27D29).
5 Leucippus' true contribution to the development of the atomist theory is unknown. His relationship to Democritus, and even his real existence, was a subject of doubt since antiquity. Epicurus himself seems to have denied that there was a philosopher Leucippus (DK 67A2).
6 See DL 9.31 = DK67A1 = Leszl 80.1.
7 For more on Epicurean atomism, see Robitzsch's chapter in this volume, "Epicureans on What There Is."
8 On the internal structure of the atom and its minimal – yet still indivisible – constituents, see Verde 2013: 17–107 and 329–32.
9 On this topic, the literature is very rich and complex. See Purinton 1999; Bobzien 2000; O'Keefe 2005.
10 For more on Epicurean epistemology, see Hahmann's chapter in this volume, "Impressions and Truth in Epicurean Epistemology."
11 In a passage by Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.50.4 (= DK 67A30 = Leszl 106.3), we read: "Leucippus and Democritus say that sensations and thoughts are alterations of the body."
12 See also the fr. DK 68B191 (from Stobaeus, *Anthology* 3.1.210; see LM 27D226 = Leszl 149 and 152), where we read that the *euthymia*, the "contentment" (or "tranquillity," as Seneca, *tranq.* 2.4 interprets), "arises in man through a moderation [*metriotês*] of joy and a good balance in life. Deficiencies and excesses tend to change into one another and set up great motions in the soul." The physical basis of every experience of pleasure and pain is evidently presupposed; see Warren 2002: 44–64.
13 On fragments from the Cyrenaics, see Giannantoni 1990: II, 3–133 (= IV section).
14 See Warren 2002: 1–9 and 193–200. This scholar a) brings into focus the relation between Democritus' *euthymia* and Epicurus' *ataraxia*; b) presents an analysis of atomistic psychology that also touches upon the positions of Anaxarchus, Pyrrho, Timon, Polystratus, and Nausyphanes.
15 On the defining features of this polemical debate involving Aristippus the Younger, Hegesias and Anniceris (on the Cyrenaic side), and (on the other side) especially Epicurus, see Tsouna 2016: 113–49; Sedley 2017: 96–7 and Verde 2018: 214–17. Already Speusippus (Plato's nephew, fourth–third cent. BCE) had theorized *aochlesia* (namely the absence of either pleasure or pain), and hence the importance of an intermediate position between pleasure and pain. This idea was taken up again by the Peripatetic Hieronymus of Rhodes (third cent. BC).
16 For more on these topics, see Rider's chapter in this volume, "Epicureans on Pleasure, Desire, and Happiness."
17 Another source for documenting this controversy is Plutarch, in his treatises a) Against Colotes (*Adversus Colotem*) and b) That Epicurus Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible (*Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurus*). In a) Colotes, Epicurus's younger follower, attacks a number of older philosophers and two schools active in his time: the Cyrenaics and the Academic followers of Arcesilaus; in b) Theon, one of characters, claims that the Cyrenaics, whom the Epicureans reproach for advocating licentiousness because they favor bodily over mental pleasure, in fact endorse a more moderate lifestyle then the Epicureans do. See Wolfsdorf 2013: 158–67; Tsouna 2016: 119–25.
18 On Cicero's interpretation of Epicurus' physical and moral doctrine, see Maso 2015: 47–80 and 147–171.
19 This is the same thesis of the Cyrenaics: "Contrary to Epicurus, they thinks that the removal of pain is not pleasure." DL 2.89 = Giannantoni IVA172.
20 See *Stromates* 2.130.4ff. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 250) was a Christian theologian, familiar with Greek philosophy.
21 As reported by Tsouna 2013, 114, Aristippus the Younger apparently invented the term *monochronos* ("unitemporal") to designate this characteristic of the human experience of pleasure. See Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistes* 12.544a-b = Giannantoni IVA174A.
22 See DL 2.8 (= Giannantoni IVA172): "The goal is pleasure according to its individual parts; happiness is the sum of particular pleasures."
23 Sedley 1998: 163–5.
24 *De Fin.* 1.62; 2.20–21.

25 The Epicurean Philodemus of Gadara, a contemporary of Cicero's, moved from Athens to Rome and later Herculaneum, where he took up residence in Piso's Villa of the Papyri. Here he collected a large number of Epicurean texts, which today constitute a most valuable source on Epicurus' main work: *Peri phuseos*. Philodemus, *contra soph.* 4.9–14 (LS 25 J), sums the *tetrapharmakos* up as follows: "God presents no fears, death no worries. And while good is readily attainable, evil is readily endurable."
26 See Maso 2015: 188–200.
27 On the topic of death see Warren 2004: 1–55.
28 On this issue see Piergiacomi 2017: 12–31
29 Cicero was convinced that Democritus and even Epicurus did not believe in the existence of the gods: see *nat. d.* 2. 76 (Leszl 112.3).
30 For the Greek text, see Sedley (in Long and Sedley 1987, II: 104) and Maso 2015: 87–8.
31 Polystratus (*De contemptu, PHerc.* 336/1050 Indelli) invites us to relinquish the belief in divine omnipotence; Philodemus (*De dis, PHerc.* 26 Diels, 152/157 Essler; *De pietate, PHerc.* 1428 Obbink) maintains that the virtue of the gods has nothing to do with what befalls mankind; Diogenes of Oinoanda (Hammerstaedt-Smith 2014: 263–69) opposes Stoic providentialism. See Piergiacomi 2017: 152–62; 209–49.

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6

CYNIC INFLUENCES ON STOIC ETHICS

Christopher Turner

Introduction: Ancient Cynicism and the Problem of Sources

Anyone who wants to understand ancient Cynicism is faced with a basic problem. We have few extant primary sources for the Cynics, and the few we do have were, with minor exceptions, written well after the major figures of ancient Cynicism (Antisthenes, Diogenes, and Crates) flourished, and were often written by authors who were either hostile to the Cynics (such as Philodemus) or by authors who may have been sympathetic but had their own agenda (such as Seneca or Lucian). In particular, the close historical and conceptual connections between the Cynics and Stoics often make disentangling the two schools a daunting task. As I have argued elsewhere, however, this problem of the paucity of historical sources for Cynic philosophy is not the only, or even most important, problem in assessing it. Instead,

> the problem turns out to be not so much one of acknowledging the difficulty of accessing a historically veracious account of ancient Cynicism as it is of wading through and sorting out the contested legacy of ancient Cynicism, in which the "original" version is only ever refracted through a variety of lenses, some sympathetic, some neutral, many hostile. The figure of Diogenes "is … always already in the process of reception." There is no direct access to his works, and anytime we read anything about them we are reading it from a source that has received the legacy in a certain way. The different receptive-interpretative options range from "idealization of the tradition … to selective reinterpretation and appropriation … to satiric denunciation … and overt suppression."
>
> (Turner 2015: 7)[1]

As I go on to note there, some sources, such as Lucian, are responsible for both satiric denunciation (*The Passing of Peregrinus) and* idealization of the tradition (*Demonax*). The same could be said of Seneca, who counted the Cynic Demetrius as a close friend and mentions him with praise in passages, while also condemning popular Cynics of his time (in, for instance, his Fifth Letter to Lucilius), or of the Roman Emperor Julian, who fiercely criticizes the vulgar Cynics of his day (*To the Uneducated Cynics*), when he is not busy appropriating Cynic thought and discourse into his eclectic and perennial philosophy elsewhere.

The discussion of Cynic ethics which follows will thus be a consideration of the Cynic tradition as it has been handed down to us, and in particular of passages from the biography of Diogenes of Sinope in Diogenes Laertius' *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. To restrict ourselves to only those Cynic texts and passages that historically predate or are contemporaneous with the emergence of Stoicism would leave us with too little material to work with, and the work of Teles for instance, from this time, is among the most Stoicized material in the Cynic corpus, so we get no closer to "authentic" Cynicism by limiting ourselves to only considering the oldest extant Cynic writings.

Who Were the Ancient Cynics?

The Cynics come to have their name, *kunikoi*, supposedly because they were pejoratively referred to as "dog-like" [*kunikos*] due to their so-called shamelessness, the fact that they ate, urinated, defecated, and copulated in public, "like dogs." Alternatively, they may have received the appellation in a more conventional manner, by reference to the place where they associated. As the Stoics obtained their name from their custom of meeting at the Stoa, the porch in the Athenian agora, so the Cynics may have received their name from Antisthenes' custom of holding forth and conversing at the *Kunosarges*, a public gymnasium just outside the walls of Athens. Over the course of history, the Cynics have been viewed in roughly one of three ways: 1) a radical sect of Socratic philosophers – when Plato was asked what he thought of Diogenes, he famously quipped that the latter struck him as a "Socrates gone mad" (DL VI.54) and this has shaped a view of them as followers of Socrates who carry their master's teachings to an extreme; 2) an only loosely connected assortment of strikingly original and unique individuals, combining features of the philosopher, the comedian and the performance artist; here the Cynics are viewed as inventors of many influential literary forms, such as Menippean satire and the diatribe, and influences on everyone from Jesus Christ and St. Paul to Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Friedrich Nietzsche; 3) shameless, worthless vulgarians who are nihilists and of little interest for serious philosophy; a version of this view has been espoused by ancient authors such as Philodemus, has been put forth in the modern era by no less a thinker than Hegel, and has continued to find an audience up to the present day. In what follows, I will ignore the third view of the Cynics, as uncharitable and indicative of an impoverished reading of the Cynic legacy. I have already treated this interpretation of the Cynics with the withering contempt it deserves elsewhere.[2] My interpretation here is something of a hybrid of readings 1) and 2) above, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The Basic Elements of Cynic Ethical Philosophy

To begin with, we should first note the centrality of *askēsis*, or "practice," for the ancient Cynics. If all ancient philosophies were "ways of life" and forms of "spiritual" practices, as Pierre Hadot argues,[3] then this is perhaps most true of ancient Cynicism. Diogenes Laertius, after all, cites ancient critics of Cynicism who objected that it was it "just a way of life" [*enstasin biou*] (DL VI.103). The purpose of this "way of life" links the Cynics to the Stoics who follow them: "'Life according to virtue' is the End to be sought" (DL VI.104). Like Socrates before them and the Stoics after them, the Cynics hold that happiness is virtue and that *the* goal in life, to be happy, requires living according to virtue. Unlike both Socrates and the Stoics, however, the Cynics have a novel approach to reaching this end, and thus Cynicism is famously characterized as "a short cut to virtue" (DL VI.104). In what follows, I will sketch in outline and discuss the basic elements of ancient Cynicism as a short cut to virtue, with a life according to virtue understood as human happiness.

Cynic *askēsis* has a simple goal: to ensure the accomplishment of virtue no matter the circumstances in which one finds oneself. A general term for such circumstances is fortune. Concern that fortune determines whether a human being can be happy or not was an ongoing part of the literary and philosophical tradition in which the Cynics operate. Diogenes begins one of the letters pseudonymously attributed to him by stating "To me life is so uncertain that I am not sure of lasting till I finish writing you this letter" (Malherbe 1977: 114–15). To see how a Cynic preserves the possibility of happiness in the face of fortune, let us now look at a couple of examples from the life of Diogenes of Sinope. Diogenes was exiled from Sinope either for adulterating the currency or for helping his father, the banker Hicesias, do so. Exile, the loss of civic status as well as the rights and privileges that characterized it, was conventionally thought to be a great misfortune. For Diogenes, however, it was the best thing that ever happened to him. "When some one reproached him with his exile, his reply was 'Nay, it was through that, you miserable fellow, that I came to be a philosopher" (DL VI.49). According to legend,[4] Diogenes had misunderstood an Oracle that commanded him *paracharattein to nomisma*, which can mean "to adulterate the currency" but can also mean "to alter social conventions" or "to transvaluate values." Diogenes, like many a receiver of oracles, mistakes the god's message and takes it too literally. Afterwards, driven out of Sinope for "adulterating the currency," he becomes a philosopher whose divine mission is, as Nietzsche reformulates the oracle in a modern register, to "transvaluate values."

Exile, traditionally viewed as a great misfortune, becomes for Diogenes "good fortune." Exile enables Diogenes to escape a restricted and conventional life, to travel about as he wishes, and to inhabit his true homeland—the *kosmos* or universe. As Diogenes puts it, "when some one reminded him that the people of Sinope had sentence him to exile, 'And I them,' said he, 'to home-staying'" (DL VI.49). "Home-staying" is "transvaluated" or inverted such that Diogenes claims it to be a misfortune, even a punishment. To be clear, this is not an "imaginary" operation that Diogenes carries out in his head, a way of coping with his misfortune by convincing himself that he is now better off. Diogenes *makes* his exile superior to a conventional citizen's life in Sinope through daring and creative acts of virtue that turn what might have been misfortune into positive good fortune. We might also, in this passage, hear echoes of that moment in Plato's *Apology* where Socrates, condemned to death, condemns the jury and his fellow Athenians to being hounded by those (the pack of Cynics?) he is about to let loose on them, declaring that

> Those who will force you to give an account will be more numerous than heretofore; men whom I restrained, though you knew it not; and they will be harsher, inasmuch as they are younger, and you will be more annoyed.
>
> (Plato 1914: 39d1–3, 139)

As Socrates turns the tables on his accusers, and condemns them to being even more annoyed by questions and criticisms of their uncritically held beliefs, so Diogenes turns the table on those reproaching him for his exile by noting that citizens of communities such as Sinope are condemned to stay home and reside in their provincial abodes while he inhabits a human being's "true" home, the *kosmos*.

Cosmopolitanism, being a citizen of the world rather than a particular city-state, originates with Diogenes. Someone once asked him where he was from, which was a way of assessing a person's social status, and Diogenes replied "I am a citizen of the world" (DL VI.63). Scholars have tended to view this pronouncement as figurative and negative, that is, as not intended all that seriously and meant merely to convey that Diogenes rejects

conventional political life and citizenship (perhaps conveniently for him, since he has been banished from his hometown). More recently, there have been some interpreters of the Cynics (e.g., Moles 1996), myself included (Turner 2015), who have argued for a positive conception of cosmopolitanism in ancient Cynicism. On my view, Diogenes is not merely playfully registering that he is not a citizen of any particular city-state but articulating a conception of politics and of "homeland" that attempts to found a universal human community of rational beings that includes all those traditionally left out, and all those displaced by widespread social and economic upheaval in the fourth century BC. In this sense, Diogenes influences Jesus Christ and St. Paul (Downing 1992), as well as the Stoics.

Slavery, another terrible misfortune, is transvaluated by Diogenes as well, and in two ways, from both the master's position and from the slave's position. Conventionally, as the swineherd puts it to a disguised Odysseus – one of the avatars of ancient Cynicism – in Homer's epic poem, a man loses half of his virtue on the day he is enslaved (XVII.322–323). Diogenes, captured by pirates, enslaved, and put on sale at an auction, seems to have suffered this very fate. However, when asked by the auctioneer what his skill or trade was, Diogenes replied that he could "Govern men. And he told the crier to give notice in case anybody wanted to purchase a master for himself" (DL VI.29). Xeniades, a wealthy free person in the market for a slave hears this and decides that Diogenes is just the person he needs to advise him and educate his sons. Diogenes orders his master around, claiming the authority to do so on analogy to physicians, who could likewise be slaves or servants and yet are obeyed by their "superiors" (DL VI.30). Again, as with his transvaluation of exile, we have here not an ideal or imaginary transformation but a real one: Diogenes, putatively Xeniades' slave, becomes in fact Xeniades' master on the basis of his authoritative knowledge of how to live well and flourish in any circumstance.

Diogenes is also reported to have at one time been a master with his own slave, Manes. One day, Manes escapes and Diogenes, unlike a conventional master, expresses no interest at all in tracking him down. When asked why he has allowed his slave to escape and is not concerned with finding him again, Diogenes remarks that "It would be absurd, if Manes can live without Diogenes, but Diogenes cannot get on without Manes" (DL VI.55). A "master" who *needs* slaves is absurd, because such a person is dependent upon his supposed inferiors, who on the traditional view "need" a master to rule them since they are unable to rule themselves. We could summarize Diogenes' reasoning here as follows: If Diogenes needs Manes, Diogenes is not self-sufficient [*autarkēs*]. All masters are self-sufficient. Therefore, if Diogenes needs Manes, Diogenes is not a master. The upshot here is that true masters rule themselves and need no slaves. Masters with slaves are an absurdity. Diogenes is self-sufficient, however, and does not need Manes, and hence is not absurd. This also works the other way: if Manes, a slave, can live well without Diogenes, he is not dependent on Diogenes and thus not a slave. Hence, Diogenes has no claim on Manes. In my view, we have a powerful critique of the institution of slavery implicit here, *in nuce*, that prefigures Hegel's famous lord and bondsman dialectic from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Finally, Diogenes experiences another common "misfortune" and once more transforms it into a stroke of good fortune. Having left Sinope and wandered around, Diogenes settles for a time in Athens, where he needs a place to lay his head. As Diogenes Laertius relates the story, "He had written to some one to try and procure a cottage for him. When this man was a long time about it, he took for his abode the tub in the Metroön" (DL VI.23). Diogenes' plans for a cottage in Athens went unfulfilled and rather than lament this, he finds a "tiny home" already waiting for him in an empty *pithos*, a "tub" or "barrel," which he makes into a shelter for himself.

Why is this better than a cottage? Well, we need only read the very next line of the biography: "in summer he used to roll in it over hot sand" (DL VI.23). This too is a form of Cynic *askēsis*. Diogenes' tub doubles as a sauna, as a means for accustoming himself to extreme heat and not experiencing it as unpleasant or unbearable. Diogenes' rolling in his barrel over hot sand in the summer or his practice of embracing, possibly attempting to wrestle, snow-covered statues in the winter is a part of a comprehensive set of physical practices whose purpose is freedom of action, is his way here of "inuring himself to every hardship" (DL VI.23). This is no small matter: Cynic *askēsis*, according to Diogenes, "is capable of overcoming anything" (DL VI.71). The physical practices Diogenes engages in to strengthen his body and accustom it to extreme temperatures, among other things, produce "perceptions … such as secure freedom of movement for virtuous deeds" (DL VI.70). As a noted scholar of Hellenistic philosophy puts it,

> It would be absurd, of course, to suppose that a robust physique entails a virtuous character, but Diogenes is not said to have made this claim. His doctrine is that good physical condition promotes states of mind that facilitate virtuous deeds – *mens sana in corpore sano* [a healthy mind in a healthy body].
>
> (Long 1996: 38–9)

To see just how important this kind of *askēsis* is to Diogenes, we need only recall his answer to a perennial question asked of philosophers, namely, what the purpose of pursuing philosophy is, what one "gets out of it," what philosophy is "good for": "On being asked what he had gained from philosophy, he replied, 'This at least, if nothing else—to be prepared for every fortune" (DL VI.63). Cynic *askēsis* frees one's body by promoting "perceptions … that secure freedom of movement," and we have just seen how this works by observing Diogenes' freedom of movement through and in the midst of conventional misfortunes, a freedom of movement that allows him to transform supposed misfortune into either matters of indifference or else outright positive good fortune.

We find a similar consideration of how to virtuously respond to fortune's turns in a text that brings us closer to the Stoics, namely, Teles' diatribe "On Circumstances." Fortune for Teles is no longer a blind force but rather a creative poetess. The social world in which human beings live and act is fortune's drama, and we are all assigned roles by fortune. Our task, according to Teles, is as follows: "A good man must therefore play well any part she assigns him" (O'Neil 1977:59). Teles, however, speaks of adapting or conforming ourselves to circumstances in order to act well in whatever situation we find ourselves, respecting and submitting to fortune as our "author." This has more in common with Stoicism than with Diogenes' Cynicism. Take the case of a person born into great wealth. For Seneca, such a person will play the role of the rich man well, since as he puts it, "Not to be able to cope with wealth is an indication of weakness" (Seneca 2015: 32). In contrast, Crates, Diogenes' student and "successor" in the Cynic tradition, born into a wealthy family, "turned his property into money…and having thus collected about 200 talents, distributed that sum among his fellow citizens" (DL VI.87). As with Crates, so too for Diogenes we do not take our orders from fortune – we make the best out of what fortune gives, but we do not simply accept fortune as giving us the best we are going to get. Diogenes, in some sense, has to play the hand that is dealt him. But he responds to fortune by taking what it gives and transforming it, changing it so that it is no longer in fact adverse. This is precisely what the biographer suggests when he notes that Diogenes opposed fortune to daring (DL VI.38). For Teles (and later, Seneca) on the other hand, we respond to fortune by taking what it gives and accepting it, trying not to transform it but instead to act well according to it. There is an important difference here worth carefully noting.

In the very same passage where we learn that Diogenes opposed fortune to daring, we also learn that he opposed nature to convention (DL VI.38), and recommended that we live "according to nature" [*kata phusin*] if we want to be happy (DL VI.71). First, let us consider what Diogenes might mean by "nature" here. William Desmond rightly notes that the Cynic conception of nature is connected to Aristotle's in assuming that nature does nothing in vain (Desmond 2008: 134). Nature, as we will see, is for the Cynics a model for accomplishing ends with elegant simplicity. Convention, in contrast, encumbers the accomplishment of ends with uncritically accepted beliefs that complicate action and its fulfillment, hindering our natural accomplishment of ends.

Let us look at a couple of anecdotes to illustrate this tension between a life according to nature and one weighed down by convention. Diogenes once had the audacity to eat in the marketplace. Eating in the marketplace was a violation of social conventions. When asked why he had eaten in the marketplace, Diogenes responded "Well, it was in the marketplace … that I felt hungry" (DL VI.58). He later authors a mock-syllogism to demonstrate that eating in the marketplace is not absurd (DL VI.69). Nature here offers a simple directive, according to Diogenes: one should eat when one is hungry. Social conventions, on the other hand, complicate matters immensely. One can visit the marketplace, be surrounded by food, be hungry, and yet one is not "supposed" to eat. Why not? Why is eating food unseemly or even revolting in one setting and so common in another that it is unremarkable? Diogenes is asking us to critically assess our social conventions and see that they hinder and obstruct nature to no good end. He dares to oppose a social convention with the simple and natural urge to satisfy his hunger on the spot rather than defer gratification to a later time and eat in a socially acceptable manner, precisely because he sees no reason why it is socially acceptable or unacceptable in the first place, and in fact views the establishment and maintenance of social norms such as this to be an unnatural burden and to promote hypocrisy.

To live according to nature is one of those tasks that requires a kind of "un-learning" [*apomanthanein*], as Antisthenes puts it (DL VI.7). We must "un-learn" uncritically accepted social conventions and learn once more how to live in a natural manner, with elegant simplicity. There are two passages in particular where we can gain a better idea of what this involves, and we will now consider each in turn. First, Diogenes learns a valuable lesson one day by observing a mouse: "Through watching a mouse running about … not looking for a place to lie down in, not afraid of the dark, not seeking any of the things which are considered to be dainties, he discovered a way through adversity" (DL VI.22). Nature's elegant simplicity, in the form of a mouse's instinctive behavior, reveals to Diogenes "a way through adversity" [*poron ... tēs peristaseōs*]. The mouse does *not* do things that humans conventionally do, and the mouse's not-doing of these things reveals to Diogenes the way [*poron*] through what might otherwise seem an impasse [*aporia*]. The mouse does not look for a place to hide itself, and this is presumably why, as mentioned above, Diogenes reacted so calmly to the plans for his cottage coming to naught. The mouse is not afraid of the dark and not a picky eater. Diogenes, too, will not be afraid of the dark (which we might here symbolically interpret as the night-fog of *tuphos*, social conventions blindly followed), nor will he only eat what are celebrated as "dainties" (though he is not opposed to eating fine food when the opportunity presents itself).

Likewise, Diogenes learns a lesson about nature when he is defeated in the contest he takes himself to be engaged in with his fellow human beings, namely, living according to nature with elegant simplicity. His opponent here is not an animal, but, tellingly, a human being who has not yet succumbed to social convention: a young boy. According to the biographer, "One day, observing a child drinking out of his hands, he cast away the cup

from his wallet with the words, 'A child has beaten me in elegant simplicity' [*paidion me nenikēkan euteleiai*]" (DL VI.37).[5] The child does not need a cup to drink water, using only his cupped hands instead. Diogenes, whose goal is to live as freely as possible, without excess baggage, thought he was living as simply as he could with his little knapsack containing only a few items, including a cup. However, when Diogenes sees the young child drinking water from cupped hands, he realizes that the cup he has been carrying all this time was unnecessary. Diogenes "unlearns" his belief that a cup is the most simple and elegant vessel for conveying water into one's mouth. The important thing to note here is that, according to Diogenes, drinking water from cupped hands is a more elegant way to satisfy our thirst because it is effective and it dispenses with unnecessary superfluous steps and additional weight. This does not mean, however, that Diogenes henceforth refuses to ever drink from a cup. After all, we cannot help but note that he admits to drinking in a tavern (DL VI.66). One might say that Diogenes learns indifference to external goods such as cups from the young boy. He learns that he does not *need* a cup and that in many situations he is better off without one.

The Cynic's relation to the body, appetites, and pleasures is thus not merely a reduction of needs to a minimum and the living of the simplest life possible. Instead, the Cynics practice a prototypical version of what later is more fully articulated by the Stoics as the doctrine of preferred indifferents. As Peter Sloterdijk puts it, "those who want to be 'prepared for every vicissitude' would understand comfort as a passing episode, like any other situation" (1987: 165). Indeed, it is just this point that defuses in advance Seneca's biting criticism of the "uneducated" Cynics of his time (cited above), that they lack the ability to "endure" comfort, good fortune, and particularly wealth. Diogenes evinces no such incapacity, and is indeed reproached for his willingness to accept gifts, enjoy seemingly unnecessary luxuries, as though he were a hypocrite. The Cynics were famous for their long and unkempt hair, and we might think that this would be one more instance where nature trumps convention, and hair is left to grow naturally and be kept as simply as possible. However, in reply to a reproach that Diogenes drank in a tavern, which seems to be the kind of superfluous pursuit a Cynic would reject, Diogenes replies that "I also get my hair cut in a barber's shop" (DL VI.66). As both Seneca and Sloterdijk rightly point out, the claim to be prepared for *any* fortune entails that one is not merely prepared for misfortune but is also ready and able to not merely endure but even enjoy good fortune.

This, of course, does *not* mean that a Cynic will seek out pleasures and luxuries wherever and whenever possible, just as it does not mean that a Cynic will absolutely reject all such opportunities as incompatible with virtuous activity. For example, when Plato suggests to Diogenes that had the latter followed him to Sicily and joined the court of the tyrant Dionysius, he would not have to scavenge for food, Diogenes replies by noting that Plato would not have had to bend to the tyrant's will had he been willing to scavenge for food (DL VI.58). We should recall Diogenes' even more famous reply to Alexander's offer: when asked what gift he could give him, Diogenes responds by requesting that the world's most powerful man cease standing over him and blocking his sunlight (DL VI.38). In other words, Diogenes suggests that the best gift Alexander could give him is to leave him alone to enjoy basking in the sunshine, the very thing he was doing before Alexander showed up. Clearly, then, Diogenes is not interested in indulging himself whenever convenient and taking whatever comes his way. In situations where enjoying a delicacy such as a cake or a drink in a tavern arises, and it does not conflict with the Cynic's commitment to virtuous activity, the Cynic is free to enjoy such "luxuries." In cases where accepting a gift or enjoying a luxury would conflict with the Cynic's commitment to virtuous activity, by compromising the Cynic's autonomy and freedom, such supposed "good fortune" is

dismissively rejected. Indeed, the Cynic transvaluates the traditional notion of good fortune here: wealth and luxury are not good fortune when they hinder autonomy and freedom, but are in fact misfortune.

The Cynic thus practices self-denial not as an absolute rule for action but in order to be prepared to treat external goods and fortune with indifference. Indifference is not the same thing as intolerance or rejection. The Cynic's indifference, as with that of the Stoics who follow, is a principled indifference. The goal remains virtuous activity, happiness, and this sometimes allows for enjoying luxuries and things that go beyond simple satisfaction of basic needs, while in other cases it will require a rejection of such luxuries and superfluities. The question in each case to be settled is: does this particular instance of "good fortune" help or hinder the accomplishment of virtuous activity? Does the agent in question "need" it to be happy? If not, would pursuing it compromise one's autonomy and freedom? If not, then one may enjoy it as a kind of "gift of the gods" (DL VI.66). But if a luxury or pleasure does compromise one's autonomy and freedom, one should spurn it. And to make sure that one is not simply rationalizing one's impulsive appetites and shifting moods, the Cynic must learn to feel pleasure in despising pleasure, so that even rejecting a pleasure that conflicts with virtue and autonomy is transvaluated and, in a kind of sublimation, converted into pleasure. An amusing example of this is provided by Diogenes' reaction to discovering a pancake in his breakfast of olives: "When breakfasting on olives amongst which a cake had been inserted, he flung it away and addressed it thus: 'Stranger, betake thee from the princes' path'" (DL VI.55). Here a simple incongruity in one's meal becomes the occasion for a darkly humorous allusion to the fateful incident of road rage that precipitates Oedipus' tragic fall.

As we have seen, the Cynic responds to fortune with daring, not mere adaptability if that means conformability, just as the mouse running around not afraid of the dark and seeing to its basic needs was daring rather than merely passively awaiting something to come its way. It is important to acknowledge the significance of shaping fortune and responding to it with elegant simplicity, while avoiding conflating it with conformity to whatever fortune as "sovereign" would dictate; simply obeying fortune's dictates would hardly be daring. To become "ready for all contingencies," as A.A. Long puts it (1996: 35) is certainly characteristic of the Cynic, but this means cultivating the daring that changes circumstances and transforms contingencies just as much as it does merely learning how to live with less during adversity.

The point of reducing needs to a minimum, of learning to live without a cup, for instance, is to enhance one's maneuverability. This is the significance of what Diogenes learns from the mouse, the key to unlocking the meaning of the Cynic's "way through adversity." As Sloterdijk notes, "Those who need little can maneuver against political fate *when they have to live in times in which politics determines our fate*" (italics mine, 1987: 169). Sloterdijk's only mistake here, in my view, is that he writes "politics" where "fortune" or "politics in the thrall of fortune" would be right. According to Sloterdijk, this necessitates a turn away from politics and towards a kind of "anti-politics." Against Sloterdijk it should be pointed out that "anti-politics" is not the proper response to politics in a time of crisis, if by "anti-politics" he means something like a turning away from politics as such, a retreat into quiescence (which is neither possible, since ultimately that is merely capitulation to power politics, nor what the Cynics advise or practice). But if Sloterdijk means by "anti-politics" something more like "unconventional politics," something we could trace back to Socrates' own philosophical practice as the "true politics" (*Gorgias*, 521d5–6) and see intensified in the Cynics, who in this regard carry out the Socratic curse on the Athenians in the *Apology* (39d1–3), then he helps us uncover one of the links between the

Cynics and Socrates, the practice of an unconventional form of politics that aims to persuade and fundamentally transform social and political life one conversation at a time, in direct contact with unique individuals in singular situations, tailored to the specific needs of an audience and thus flexible, elastic and not afraid to use humor, storytelling, and a variety of rhetorical strategies to lead others toward living an examined life.

Cynic ethics is an ethics for a time of crisis, for a time in which blind fortune seems prevalent. How is it possible for individuals and communities to persevere and preserve a claim to happiness in the face of societal disintegration, social upheaval, political and economic turmoil, and widespread catastrophe? This is not an academic question, but an existential one that resonates well into the present day, as one interpreter of the Cynics has suggested when he remarks that Diogenes'

> life is not unfamiliar to us. We see that blows of fortune and the threat of an uncertain future were also realities for a Greek of the fourth century BC, that great cities such as Thebes were destroyed in this century, and correspondingly themes such as exile and emigration, sudden shifting of rich and poor and above all the traffic in slavery turn up in many of the stories about Diogenes. This man was neither a vainglorious jester nor a serene sage, which he was explained as by, on the one hand, a Platonic tradition and, on the other hand, a Stoic tradition. He was, rather, a victim and a critic of his time.
>
> (Heinrich 1966: 134)

Suffering fortune's blows even as he criticizes them, Diogenes is neither mere victim nor (armchair) critic, but immanently inhabits and undergoes the various misfortunes plaguing his time: exile, homelessness, slavery, poverty, and so forth, while simultaneously critiquing them and examining whether or not they are the universal evils they have been taken to be, learning the truth about them through an experimental engagement with them. Exile is transformed into cosmopolitanism, homelessness into easy living without encumbrance, poverty into freedom *from* wanting or craving unnecessary luxuries or status objects. Fortune ceases to be a blind power that determines whether or not a human being can be happy, and becomes instead a source for creative challenges to our ethical agency. In Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting's admirable formulation,

> Since it belongs essentially to fortune to suddenly and unexpectedly befall one, prospective anticipation of its possibilities is the initial stage toward its overcoming; to adapt oneself to every possible turn of fortune means to preserve oneself in the face of fortune.
>
> (Niehues-Pröbsting 1979: 149)

This, in a nutshell, is the lesson of Cynic ethics: no matter how prevalent misfortune is, no matter how much fortune seems to hold our fates under its sway, we *can* preserve ourselves and even, Diogenes seems to suggest, enjoy ourselves as we deftly maneuver through its intricate labyrinth. Echoing Aristotle, we could say that it is *in our power* or *up to us* to make "the beautiful shine through" (*NE* I.10) in the midst of adversity: Croesus' funeral pyre becomes an opportunity to advise the Persian emperor, the ransoming of Hector's body allows both Priam and Achilles to come to terms with their overwhelming grief through unexpected mutual admiration, and Diogenes, a homeless wandering beggar, is envied by Alexander the Great and memorialized after his death by the Corinthians with a statue bearing an inscription that reads: "Time makes even bronze grow old: but thy glory,

Diogenes, all eternity will never destroy. Since thou alone didst point out to mortals the lesson of self-sufficingness and the easiest path of life" (DL VI.78). Diogenes' lesson, his showing us "a short cut to virtue," remains an influential legacy within and beyond Hellenistic philosophy.

Notes

1 The quotations within this citation are from Branham and Goulet-Cazé 1996, 14.
2 See Turner 2015: 22–3. I offer a more positive assessment of the Cynic as nihilist in my forthcoming article for *Epoché*.
3 See Hadot 1995 and 2002.
4 Julian 1913, "To the Uneducated Cynics," 25.
5 I have modified the translation of *euteleiai* here so that it signifies "elegant simplicity" rather than "plainness of living." Though often considered pejorative and negative, meaning something like "cheap" or "simple," the Greek term is initially positive. Cf. Thuc. 2.40: "We love the beautiful with elegant simplicity and we philosophize without softness" (my translation of *philokaloumen te gar met' euteleias kai philosophoumen aneu malakias*) could practically be a motto for Diogenes and yet appears in Pericles' epochal funeral oration, a paradigm of fifth century Athenian democratic ideology. Since it is all too common to instead think of it pejoratively, "simple" as in "simple-minded" or "impoverished," I make the sense of the term clearer by restoring its positivity to it in adding "elegant" to "simplicity." My translation plays on the double meaning of the word "elegant" in English: both beautifully refined, *and* accomplishing an end in the most straightforward, sleekest manner, without superfluous ornamentation or unnecessary steps. A successful proof with the fewest steps is elegant in both senses: beautiful *and* simple because it accomplishes the end, an excellent response, with no superfluity.

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7

STOICS AND PRESOCRATIC MATERIALISTS

Ricardo Salles

Introduction

The single most important Presocratic thesis regarding the material composition of natural beings is probably that there are bodies, called "elements" [*stoicheia*], from which all natural beings are constituted and into which they all dissolve. The elements are the ultimate components of natural beings in the sense that they are not themselves constituted from, or dissolvable into, other bodies. Thus, the elements are the *basic* material components of natural beings.[1] Although there was a great deal of dispute regarding the exact number and the nature of the elements, many Presocratic thinkers agreed on the general idea that they were to be found in the bodies identified in ancient physics as "simple" [*hapla*], namely, the four sensible substances that we perceive in everyday life as fire, air, water and earth.[2] Stoic physics firmly belongs to this tradition and the aim of the present chapter is to present in detail the elemental theory of the Stoics.

I shall focus on two of its tenets. One is that ordinary fire, air, water and earth are indeed the most basic bodies that deserve to be called "elements": no body prior to them is elemental.[3] The other is that, although no body prior them is elemental, there are indeed bodies prior to them, which do not therefore receive the name of "elements." These are prior to the "elements" proper in the sense that they are bodies from which the four traditional elements are constituted and into which they dissolve. These bodies are the basic corporeal principles [*archai*] of the cosmos: god [*theos*] or "active" principle [*to poioun*], and fundamental matter [*hulē*] or "passive" principle [*to paschon*].[4] The combination of these two theses is philosophically intriguing and one obvious question that it elicits concerns the relation between principles and elements: if the two principles are indeed the basic components of all natural beings, why are they not elemental? Why not follow the Presocratic tradition and use the term "element" to refer to the *basic* components of natural beings? As we shall see, one possible answer to these questions is that the Stoic theory of elements rests on a new conception of element, not present—explicitly at least—in Presocratic physics, according to which the elements of a natural body must certainly be prior to that body (something out of which the natural body is constituted and into which it is dissolved), but in addition they must be separable from one another in the strong sense that they must be capable of existing without one another. The two Stoic principles, however, cannot be separated from each another, at least not in the substantive sense of independent

existence in which the elements are separable from each other. The reciprocal separability of elements as a criterion of "elementality" has no parallel in Presocratic thought and marks a novel contribution of Stoic physics to ancient elemental theory.

To present the Stoic theory of elements, I shall concentrate on the main source that we have for it, namely, a passage from the doxographer Stobaeus (fifth century CE) that I call the "Fragment." Despite its importance, the Fragment is difficult to interpret and there is no consensus among the specialists regarding its full meaning. The main problem is, what are exactly the three senses of the term "element" [*stoicheion*] that occur in the text and how do they relate to one another?[5] One specific problem is precisely that of whether the term, in any of these senses, may be applied to a body more basic than the four traditional elements. In what is perhaps the most complete study on the Fragment, the article by John Cooper "Chrysippus on physical elements" (Cooper 2009), it is argued that in one of the three senses of "element" in the text—the first one—the term does apply to the four traditional elements, but that in the other two it does not apply to them but to more basic bodies: in one of them, "element" would denote a body similar to ordinary fire, but prior to it and to its generation at the cosmogony; in the other, it would refer to an even more basic and simple body, prior to the cosmogony itself, namely, the "glow" [*augē*] that the conflagration leaves when it is extinguished and that should be identified with god. I shall return to these ideas. But the reading I propose of the Fragment departs from Cooper's. In opposition to what he claims, I would like to show that there is nothing in the text that either says or implies that, in any of the three senses, "element" applies to bodies more basic that the four traditional elements. I do not mean to claim thereby that there are not in Stoic physics bodies that are prior to the four traditional elements. As I mentioned earlier, the Stoic principles—god and fundamental matter—are indeed prior them. But, as we shall see, no reference is made to them *in* the Fragment, either implicitly or explicitly.

The chapter is divided as follows. In the first section, I quote the Fragment in extenso, offer an outline of its structure and content, and present the first of the three senses of the term "element." In the next two sections, I deal with the other two senses and argue that in neither of them the term applies to bodies more basic than the four traditional elements. In the final section, I analyze which bodies are indeed more basic than the four elements and consider why they are not called "elements" by the Stoics.

The Fragment and the First Sense of "Element"

The Fragment is the passage of Stobaeus classified by Hermann Diels in *Doxographi Graeci* (*DG* 458, 12–459, 10) as fragment 21 of the Stoic Arius Didymus (first century BCE), later printed by Wachsmuth in section 1.10.16c of his edition of Stobaeus' *Eclogae physicae et ethicae* (*Ecl*. 1.129, 2–130, 20), and included by von Arnim as passage 413 of the second volume of the *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. It runs as follows:

T1: Stobaeus, *Ecl*. 1.129, 2–130, 20

> Of Chrysippus. Regarding the elements that proceed from substance, he upholds things such as these, following Zeno, the founder of the school. He says that there are four elements <fire, air, water and earth, from which all things are constituted, that is, animals,> plants, the cosmos as a whole and the things it contains, and into which they dissolve. [6] But fire is called "element" par excellence too,[7] given that, by transformation, the other [elements] are constituted from it in the first place and into which they are dissolved ultimately, but it is not itself receptive of dispersion or dissolution into another. Although according to this definition fire is said to be

> perfectly elemental (for it is not with another), according to the previous definition it is also constitutive along with other things, since the first transformation to occur is of fire into air by condensation, the second of this into water, and the third, by analogy, when it is even more condensed, into earth. And again, from this, when it dissolves and disperses, the first dispersion is into water, the second of water into air, and the third and last into fire. And, the igneous is called "fire," the aeriform is called "air," and similarly in the other cases. According to Chrysippus, therefore, "element" is predicated in three senses. In one, it is predicated of fire because the other [elements] are constituted by transformation from it and have their dissolution into it. In another, it is predicated of the four elements—fire, air, water and earth—(since other things are constituted either from one or from some or from all of them: from all four, things like animals and all terrestrial compounds, from two things like the moon which is constituted from fire and air, and from one, things like the sun, since the sun is only constituted from fire and is, in fact, pure fire). In the third sense, "element" is predicated of that which is primarily so constituted that it produces generation out of itself, methodically, up to a terminus, from which it is dissolved into itself in a similarly methodical way. He also said that there were such theses regarding the [notion of] element because it is what changes most easily by itself and also the principle <and the seminal> reason, [8] the eternal power that possesses a nature such as to move <itself> downwards in the direction of change and from the change upwards, [9] in a completely cyclical way, consuming all things into itself and reconstituting [all things] again from itself in an orderly and methodical way.

The purpose of the Fragment, as is clearly indicated in the text, is to describe the senses in which the "element" may be used according to an elemental theory first proposed by Zeno and later developed by Chrysippus. In outline, the passage is divided into two main sections. In the first one, running from the beginning to line 130,1 ("Of Chrysippus […] and similarly in the other cases"), the two first senses are presented. In the second one, from line 130.1 to the end ("According to Chrysippus, therefore […] in an orderly and methodical way"), the first two senses are referred to again, although in reverse order, and the third sense is introduced. The last lines of the second part seem to offer an example of "element" in the third sense. It is the body denoted by the complex definite description "the eternal power that possesses a nature such as to move <itself> downwards in the direction of change and from the change upwards, in completely cyclical way, consuming all things into itself and reconstituting [all things] again from itself in an orderly and methodical way."

There is no question that in the first sense of "element" listed in the text the term applies to the four traditional elements and to no body more basic than them. Although the words "fire, air, water and earth, from which all things are constituted, that is, animals" do not occur in the manuscripts, they are supplied by Diels because the manuscripts do say that the elements are "four" in number, which strongly implies the four traditional elements. For this reason, Wachsmuth and other scholars who have dealt with the Fragment have followed Diels on this.[10]

The Second Sense of "Element"

The second sense of "element" is described as follows:

> But fire is called "element" par excellence too, given that, by transformation, the other [elements] are constituted from it in the first place and into which they are

> dissolved ultimately, but it is not itself receptive of dispersion o dissolution into another.
>
> (1.129, 7–11)

In other words, "element" does not apply to the *four* traditional elements, but only to one of them, which is "perfectly" elemental [*autotelōs*], namely, fire. This is so because, we are told, fire is that from which the other three are constituted by contraction or "condensation," and into which they are dissolved by expansion or "diffusion." The second sense is described in similar terms in the second half of the fragment (where it appears before the first), at (1.130, 1–4). The scope of the term "element" in the second sense, therefore, is narrower than its scope in the first sense. Notice, however, that nothing in the text seems to suggest that the fire referred to in connection with the second sense is something other than ordinary fire,[11] and that the elemental changes cited in relation to this sense is something other than the ordinary reciprocal change of the elements, present for example in meteorological phenomena. Thus, the term "element" in the second sense does not seem to refer to something more basic than ordinary fire.

According to Cooper, however, this is not so. The fire that the second sense regards as elemental is not ordinary fire, but something prior to them. Cooper's argument may be summarized as follows: i) the elemental changes described in connection with the second sense are not the ordinary phenomena of the reciprocal change of the elements; ii) they are rather processes that take place when the cosmos is created—they are "cosmogonical"—and, in fact, they are prior to the generation of the four traditional elements themselves; but iii) the bodies involved in these cosmogonical processes are not the four elements themselves, but other bodies distinct from, and more basic than, them; therefore, iv) the "perfectly" elemental body referred to in connection with the second sense is not the ordinary fire that is part of the four traditional elements, but another body, also called "fire," distinct from, and more basic than, ordinary fire.[12] I believe that premises ii) and iii) of the argument are questionable and therefore that, although the argument is valid, there are no reasons for accepting its conclusion. In what follows, I focus on premise ii).[13]

First of all, let me quote again the three key passages where the second sense is introduced. One is T1a:

> But fire is called "element" par excellence too, given that, by transformation, the other [elements] are constituted from it in the first place and into which they are dissolved ultimately, but it is not itself receptive of dispersion or dissolution into another.
>
> (1.129, 7–11)

The other is T1b: "According to Chrysippus, therefore, 'element' is predicated in three senses. In one, it is predicated of fire because the other [elements] are constituted by transformation from it and have their dissolution into it" (1.130, 1–4). The third is T1c, where the elemental changes mentioned in T1a and T1b are described in more detail in terms of contraction and expansion:

> the first transformation to occur is of fire into air by condensation, the second of this into water, and the third, by analogy, when it is even more condensed, into earth. And again, from this, when it dissolves and disperses, the first dispersion is into water, the second of water into air, and the third and last into fire.
>
> (129, 18–23)[14]

The two sequences of changes mentioned in these three passages have no parallel at the cosmogony. The two sequences are, on the one hand, that which begins with fire and ends with earth (S1) and, on the other, that which runs in the opposite direction from earth to fire (S2):

S1: fire -> air -> water -> earth
S2: earth -> water -> air -> fire

But at the cosmogony there are no sequences parallel to S1 and S2. The cosmogonical sequences that take place at the cosmogony according to Zeno and Chrysippus are described in the following passage from Diogenes Laertius.[15]

T2: DL 7.142 (*SVF* 1.102 and 2.581, LS 46C)

> The cosmos is generated whenever the substance is turned from fire through air into moisture; then the thicker parts of the moisture condense and end up as earth, but the finer parts are thoroughly rarefied, and when they have been thinned still further, they produce fire. Thereafter by mixture plants and animals and the other natural kinds are produced out of these.[16]

T2 describes several different cosmogonical sequences starting from the extinction of the fire of the conflagration to the generation animals and the natural species. The sequences that interest us here are those that refer to elemental changes. The earliest may be described as follows:

S3: fire -> air -> water

Once the whole of substance was transformed into water, three other sequences take place. One part of this water is transformed in earth, another into air, and another remains in a liquid state:

S4.1: water1 -> earth
S4.2: water2 -> air
S4.3: water3 -> water

Finally, the last elemental sequence occurs where one part of the air generated at S4.2 is transformed into fire:

S5: air -> fire

As we may notice, the sum of S3 and S4.1 corresponds roughly speaking to the order of sequence S1. Therefore, in favor of Cooper, S1 could be an abbreviated and simplified version of the process described in S3 and S4.1 as a whole. But this is not the case with S2, the sequence that corresponds to the generation of fire from earth. S2 is not paralleled by any of the cosmogonical sequence above mentioned, nor by any combination of them. According to S2, fire is generated from air, which is in accordance with S5, and air is generated from water, which is in accordance with S4.2. However, according to S2, water is generated from earth, as is the case in the ordinary phenomenon of elemental reciprocal change. But there is no time in the *cosmogony*, as described in the Diogenes passage T2, at which earth is generated from water. In consequence, contrary to premise ii) in Cooper's

argument, only one of the two sequences mentioned in the Fragment in connection with the second sense of "element" has any parallel at the cosmogony. So it is simpler to suppose that the sequence that does have a cosmogonical parallel—S1—is not really intended to refer to the cosmogony, and that both S1 and S2 refer to the ordinary phenomenon of elemental reciprocal change, than to surmise that S1 and S2 refer to two completely different stages of the history of the cosmos.

As I have argued in this section, the term "element" in the second sense does not apply to bodies prior the four traditional elements. In particular, it does not apply to something prior to ordinary fire, and the discussion has drawn forth that the argument given by Cooper to contend that it does is questionable.

The Third Sense of "Element"

The third sense of "element" only appears in the second part of the Fragment: "In the third sense, 'element' is predicated of that which is primarily so constituted that it produces generation out of itself, methodically, up to a terminus, from which it is dissolved into itself in a similarly methodical way" (130, 10–13). The chief criterion for determining whether something is an "element" according to the third sense is wide and somewhat vague: a body "A" is an "element" of another body *B* if and only if *B* is constituted "methodically" [*hodō*] from *A* and if *B* is dissolved "methodically" into *A*. The text does not say what "methodically" means. But the idea may be simply that the constitution of *A* from *B* and the dissolution of *B* into *A* must be sequences that follow a definite order. An example of elements in this second sense would be, for instance, tin and copper in relation to bronze. Bronze is obtained from tin and copper if and only if tin and copper undergo a specific procedure. Part of this procedure is that tin and copper must be exposed to a temperature of at least 1,085 degrees centigrade, the melting point of copper. Similarly, bronze breaks down into tin and copper in the sense that the tin and copper that constitute a given portion of bronze may be separated from one another. But here, too, a specific procedure is required. The portion of bronze must be exposed to a sufficiently high temperature in order for the tin to melt down without melting the copper, namely, a temperature of 240 degrees centigrade. This would not be sufficient in order to separate the tin from the copper. But in the absence of advanced technology it is certainly a necessary condition. So, given the specificity of these two procedures, copper and tin would be "elements" according to the third sense of the term. For there is a body, bronze, that dissolves into them "methodically" and is also constituted from them also "methodically."

If we follow this broad interpretation of the third sense, the first two senses are species of the third insofar as anything that qualifies as an element in the first or the second sense is also an element in the third but not vice versa: not every body that qualifies as an element in the third sense is also an element in the first or the second.[17] Clearly there are bodies that qualify as elements in the third sense that do not qualify as "elements" in the first or second sense. According to example I gave, tin and copper are elements of it in the third sense. However, they are not elements in the first sense because they can dissolve into more basic bodies, e.g. into the basic metals of which they are constituted, and ultimately, according to Stoic physics, into the four traditional elements. The same applies to the second sense. Evidently, tin and copper are not bodies that one could obtain from the expansion of other bodies: there are no bodies that transform into tin and copper by an increase of their volume. And even if there were such bodies it is not clear how tin and copper would be the limit of the expansion of these bodies. In this respect, tin and copper do not satisfy the conditions established by the second sense of "element."

The interpretation I have just offered of the third sense is radically different from the one advocated by Cooper. According to him, the key to the third sense lies in the last lines of the second half of the fragment:

> He also said that there were such theses regarding the [notion of] element because it is what changes most easily by itself and also the principle <and the seminal> reason, the eternal power that possesses a nature such as to move <itself> downwards in the direction of change and from the change upwards, in a completely cyclical way, consuming all things into itself and reconstituting [all things] again from itself in an orderly and methodical way.
>
> (1.130, 14–20)

There are several problems for the interpretation of this passage. One of them is the reference at the beginning of T1g to "such theses" [*toiautas apodoseis*] regarding the notion of element. Are they the theses presented in connection with the third sense only or are they rather those presented in connection with the three senses altogether and not only the third one? A second difficulty concerns the identity of the body to which these lines refer as "the eternal power that possesses a nature etc." What is it?

In Cooper's interpretation, the term "such theses" refers to the theses related to the *third* sense and the body alluded to in the passage is the glow [*augē*] that the conflagration leaves behind once it is extinct. This cosmic glow, therefore, is the body to which the term "element" should be applied in the third sense according to Cooper. And given that this cosmic glow is more basic than the four traditional elements, the third sense would be evidence that in the Fragment the term "element" applies to bodies more basic than these elements. The reasons given by Cooper for identifying the body described at the end of the Fragment with the cosmic glow are highly complex. [18] But the leading idea comes from a new and very appealing interpretation of Chrysippus' theory of conflagration that Cooper develops in great detail. According to this theory, Cooper argues, this glow, or "flash of light" (2009: 96, 104–6, 110–14) is something that Chrysippus identifies with a state in which god, once the conflagration is over, pauses to reflect on the design of the new cosmos that will arise after the conflagration. The thesis that the extinction of fire of the conflagration yields a glow occurs in only one source: Philo of Alexandria, *De aeternitate mundi* 90 (*SVF* 1.511 and 2.611–612).[19] This source is, therefore, a key feature in Cooper's interpretation. This state, on his view, is one in which god pervades fundamental matter without causing it to have any quality, which allows him to think exclusively about cosmic design without any distraction. In Cooper's own words:

> although he or it [*sc*. god] in his active nature retains and keeps on thinking to himself all the thoughts that in the actual world get put into effect in introducing all the qualifications of matter that constitute all the different sorts of substance that there actually are, he is not then using those thoughts to act in any differential way upon particular expanses of matter so as to endow substances with their particular characters; he is therefore not then affecting matter with any of those qualifications.
>
> (2009: 102–3)

This state of god, of course, is not the fire of the conflagration since, *ex hypothesi*, it is a state that obtains once the conflagration is extinct. And this state would be the only body that the third sense would recognize as an element:

> So there can be no doubt that in this third way of applying the term Chrysippus means to be assigning the title of element to god, as the originary substance, i.e. to prime matter as qualified by having god or reason spread everywhere through it. (2009: 114)

Cooper is right in thinking that the body referred to at the end of the fragment is an example of "element" in this sense. But it is incorrect to suppose that this body is the cosmic glow that Cooper has in mind. Firstly, there is no evidence in the fragment that it does refer to it. The body in question is described as "consuming all things into itself and reconstituting [all things] again from itself in an orderly and methodical way." Now if we look at other sources that also allude to the body into which the cosmos is dissolved and from which it is reconstituted "methodically," we notice that they identify it with god *as fire* and not with the cosmic glow. One example is a passage from Stobaeus classified by Diels as Aetius, *Placita* 1.7.33 and collected by von Arnim under *SVF* 2.1027 (cited by Cooper in 2009: 103 y 113).

T3: Stobaeus, *Ecl*. 1.37, 20–38, 3 (*SVF* 2.1027, LS 46A, BS 17.3)

> The Stoics made god out to be intelligent, a designing fire which methodically proceeds towards creation of the cosmos, and encompasses all the seminal principles according to which everything comes about according to fate, and a breath pervading the whole cosmos, which takes on different names owing to the alterations of the matter through which it passes, and the cosmos, the celestial bodies and the earth to be gods, and the highest intellect of all to be an ethereal god.

This is not the place to carry out a full examination of the concept of designing fire in Stoic physics and, in particular, of the question whether this fire is different from ordinary fire. But the hypothesis that designing fire is not a body more basic than ordinary fire, and that both are one and the same fire described in two different ways, has some plausibility.[20] And, if this hypothesis is correct, the third sense of "element" in the Fragment would not refer to something more basic than the four traditional elements, but to ordinary fire.

A second reason for thinking that the body at the end of the Fragment is ordinary fire is that this body is said to "consume" the cosmos [*panta katanaliskousa*]. However, according to Stoic cosmology, the only body that *consumes* the cosmos is the fire of the conflagration and not the glow that this fire generates. In fact, the verb "consume" [*katanaliskoun*] is one that the Stoics usually employ to refer to the action that fire exerts on combustible matter and not to an action that the cosmic glow could carry out on anything once the fire of the conflagration is extinct.[21] It would be odd that this glow also had the power to consume the cosmos if the cosmos has already been consumed by the fire of the conflagration. In sum, the reasons given by Cooper for thinking that the third sense of "element" in the Fragment refers to something prior to the four traditional elements and, in particular, to something prior to ordinary fire, are disputable.

Final Remarks: The Bodies More Basic Than the Four Elements

I have tried to bring out that the elemental theory reported in the fragment does not consider the possibility of applying the term "element" to something prior to the four traditional elements. As I mentioned earlier, this does not preclude that for the Stoics some bodies are prior to the four traditional elements in the specific sense that the former are constituted from, and dissolved into, them. In fact, in Stoic physics there are such bodies.

They are its two basic principles: god and fundamental matter. According to some sources, these are more basic than the four traditional elements at least in the sense that the latter are composed of the former: any portion of any one of them is ultimately analyzable in terms of god acting on fundamental matter.[22] And this leads us to the puzzle I mentioned in the Introduction: if the two principles are indeed the ultimate bodily components of all natural beings, why are they not elemental?[23] To search for an answer we may look at the following passage, a key text on the Stoic distinction between principles and elements

T4: DL 7.134 (*SVF* 2.299, LS 44B)

> They [the Stoics] think that there are two principles of the universe, that which acts and that which is acted upon. That which is acted upon is unqualified substance, i.e. matter; that which act is the reason in it, i.e. god […] They say there is a difference between principles and elements: the former are ungenerated and indestructible, whereas the elements pass away at the conflagration. The principles are bodies and without form, [24] but the elements are endowed with form.[25]

We may think of at least one hypothesis to explain why, according to the theory presented in this passage, principles are not elemental in spite of the fact that they are *bodies* (*sōmata*) more basic than them. The hypothesis is that this is so because the theory rests on a criterion of elementality where separation plays a central role: a body is an element only if it is separable from the other bodies that are also constitutive of a complex body and only, when it separates from them, can it exist without them. For example, if a complex body such as wood is constituted from two more basic bodies *A* and *B*, then *A* and *B* are "elements" of wood only if *A* and *B* are separable from each other if, and only if, when they are separated, they can exist without each other. It is clear than in Stoic physics the four elements would satisfy this criterion because, in general terms, each of the four elements can in principle exist independently from one another. In fact, there are stages at the cosmogony and at the conflagration in which at least three of them—fire, air, and water—do exist without the other three.[26] In contrast, god and fundamental matter would not satisfy this criterion of elementality because in Stoic physics the two principles are precisely not "separable" at least in the sense in which elements are "separable" from each other, namely, in the sense that there is a moment in time at which one exists but not the other.[27] Thus, god and fundamental matter are prior to any other natural body because they both existed before the cosmos is generated and after it is destroyed. But given that they are inseparable from each other, they are not elemental according to the criterion of elementality just mentioned. And this would be the reason why, in contrast with the four traditional elements, god and fundamental matter are not elemental. This new criterion of elementality—absent or at least not explicitly present in our sources for the Presocratics—is a major contribution of Stoic physics to ancient materialism.[28]

Notes

1 See notably Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1.3 983b6–11 and 5.3 1014a31–34. The Presocratics themselves do not seem to have used the term "elements" to refer to the elements so understood. For a recent assessment of the evidence, see Crowley 2005. For a discussion of Aristotle's own elemental theory see Crowley 2008 and 2013.

2 See e.g. Aristotle, *Gen. Corr.* 1.1 314a26-b1 and the evidence assembled by Diels in connection with Empedocles under DK 31A33, 31A37 and 31B6–7.

3 The main evidence for this thesis is the Arius Didymus passage that I call the "Fragment"; see below.

4 See especially Diogenes Laertius 7.134 (*SVF* 2.299) and 7.136 (*SVF* 2.580).
5 See Diels 1899: 38–9; Bréhier 1951: 134–41; Gould 1970: 119–20; Lapidge 1973: 262–78; Long and Sedley 1987: 1.286–289 y 2.278; Cooper 2009; Salles 2009: 127–29; Boeri and Salles 2014: 377–93; and Hensley 2018.
6 The words in brackets are supplied by Wachsmuth following Diels.
7 Reading τὸ δὲ <πῦρ καὶ> κατ' ἐξοχὴν with Wachsmuth (similar to τὸ δὲ <πῦρ> κατ' ἐξοχὴν proposed by Diels) against τὸ δὲ κατ' ἐξοχὴν printed by Long-Sedley (followed by Cooper) in accordance with the mss.
8 I used the reading of Usener adopted by von Arnim καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ <καὶ ὁ σπερματικὸς> λόγος against the reading of the mss. printed by Wachsmuth, which simply have καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ λόγος.
9 I follow the reading ὥστε <αὐτήν τε> proposed Wachsmuth (who also deletes γῆν further in the line) against the ὥστε γῆν τε printed in the mss. Other readings that have been proposed are ὥστε <αὐτὴ αὐτήν> by Hirzel (who also deletes γῆν) and ὥστε πάντων ποιεῖν κάτω πρὸς γῆν τὴν τροπὴν by Diels
10 See Long and Sedley 1987: 2.277–278 and Cooper 2009: 116–17.
11 Further along in the fragment the term "fire" is given a broader meaning: "And, the igneous is called "fire," the aeriform is called "air," and similarly in the other cases." (1. 129,24–130, 1). The function of this claim in the fragment is not obvious and scholars have tried different conjectures to explain it. Cooper for instance, argues that "the aeriform" refers to the body more basic than ordinary fire that he calls "proto-fire" (2009: 112 n. 41). Notice, however, contra Cooper, that "aeriform" may qualify not something more basic than ordinary fire, but something *less* basic than it, i.e. anything mostly composed of fire.
12 See Cooper 2009: 102–15.
13 For a discussion of premise iii) see Salles 2015b: 18–19.
14 The idea, implied here, that the four elements change into one another by contraction and expansion appears in other sources on Stoic physics, for example, *SVF* 2.406, 2.537, 2.579 and 2.581.
15 Another important source, also cited by Cooper (2009: 111 n. 40), is Plutarch, *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 1052F-1053B (*SVF* 2.579, *BS* 15.8). I leave aside the question of whether the cosmogony in Cleanthes, reported in *SVF* 1.497, is the same as the one attested for Zeno and Chrysippus. For this question, see Salles 2015a.
16 Long and Sedley 1987, translation slightly modified.
17 Hensley (Hensley 2017) analyses the third sense of "element" (the third "way" in which the term is used) as something much narrower and identifies god in the form of either fire or breath as the only referent of "element" in this sense (see pp. 370–75 and 378), thus departing from Cooper who argues, as explained in this section, that the referent is god in the form of a cosmic glow. In his argument, and in contrast with what I do, Hensley gives much weight to the claim in the fragment (130, 10–13) that an elemental body in this sense must be active (which would exclude, for example, that tin and copper be elemental) and the "first" cause of constitution or dissolution of the compound body.
18 See especially Cooper 2009: 102–5 and 113–15.
19 For discussion see, in addition to Cooper 2009, Gourinat 2009: 61–2.
20 See for instance Benatouïl 2002: 307–329 and Salles 2005: 61–73.
21 See especially Plutarch, *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 1052B-D (*SVF* 2.604 y 1068, LS 46E, BS 18.6). I deal with this issue in Salles 2016.
22 See for example Diogenes Laertius 7.136 and Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 10.312 (*SVF* 2.309).
23 A similar question is addressed in Hensley 2017: how can the four traditional elements be elemental if they are not basic (since there are bodies prior to them, namely, the principles)? Hensley's answer is that in order for a body A to be elemental ("primary and final") it is necessary, not that A be ingenerable and indestructible simpliciter (i.e. not susceptible of resolving into, and of being generated from, something else) but merely that, if A is destroyed and generated, the processes by which it is are different from those by which *complex* bodies resolve into A and are generated from it, a thesis that Hensley calls UR* and that, according to him, is present in the fragment. Although I agree with this, it does not help to address the problem that concerns me, namely, why the *principles* are not elemental.
24 I adopt the reading σώματα present in most mss. following most editors (notably Lapidge 1973: 263–264; Long and Sedley 1987: 1.273–274 y 2.266; Frede 2005: 215–216; Gourinat 2009: 49 y 54–56;

Cooper 2009: 97 n. 11 y 99–101; Ademollo 2012: 221; Boeri and Salles 2014: 361) against ἀσωμάτους in the parallel text of the Suda (followed by von Arnim and H. S. Long) and ἀσώματα in ms. Φ (one of the "Excerpta Vaticana", for which see Dorandi 2013: 5 and 32–33). The reading σώματα is well supported by other sources that also identify the principles as bodies, and there are several philosophical reasons for adopting it. The latest discussion of the Stoic principles is Hensley 2018.

25 Long and Sedley 1987, translation slightly modified.

26 For the cosmogony see T3 above. For the conflagration in connection with this specific question, see Plutarch, *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 1053B-C (*SVF* 2.605) and Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2.118 (*SVF* 2.593) discussed in Salles 2015a: 15–17.

27 The reciprocal inseparability of the Stoic principles is attested at least in Calcidius, *in Tim*. 294 (*SVF* 1.87) Alexander of Aphrodisias, *in Metaph.* 8, 2–6 and 178, 15–19 (*SVF* 2.308 and 2.306), and Proclus, *in Tim*. 1.266, 25–267, 4 (SVF 2.307). The latest systematic treatment of this issue is Hensley 2018 (cited in the previous footnote) with whom I agree for the most part. According to Hensley, 1) the Stoic principles are roles that must be distinguished from the bodies that happen to occupy these roles in much the same way as (to follow the Hensley's example) the President of the United States (a role) must be distinguished from the person that happens to occupy that role at a given time; given this distinction, 2) the two principles are inseparable de dicto (necessarily, for all bodies x and y, if x occupies god's role and y occupies matter's role, then x and y are conjoined), but separable de re (it's not the case that for all bodies x and y, if x occupies God's role and y occupies matter's role, then x and y are necessarily conjoined); and 3) the bodies that occupy the principles actually separate at the conflagration since at the conflagration fire, the body that occupies the role of active principle, is the only body that exists, which implies that it can exist without any other body. I find these three theses plausible and at any rate I agree with him at p. 207 n. 59: "necessarily, for all bodies x and y, and for all times T, if x realizes God's role at T and y realizes matter's role at T, then x and y are conjoined (i.e. not separated) at T."

28 Some of the material in this chapter was previously published in Spanish and in a different form as Salles 2015b, which offers a fuller treatment of some issues. An earlier version was presented at the "X Taller de Filosofía Antigua del Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas" held at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in August 2015. I am thankful to Alfonso Correa, Tiziano Dorandi, Edgar González, Andrea Lozano, Maribel Ramírez, Teresa Rodríguez, Carolina Sánchez for their questions. I have also learned a great deal from discussing these issues with, and reading the work of, Ian Hensley (Hensley 2018). The present chapter was written with the support of a research project from PAPIIT-UNAM (IN403620), a sabbatical grant from PASPA-UNAM, and a GlaxoSmithKline Fellowship from the National Humanities Center in North Carolina, and a Visiting Scholarship from Wolfson College, Oxford, to all of which I am grateful.

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Further Reading

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Sedley, D. N. (2008) "Hellenistic physics and metaphysics," in K. Algra et al. (eds) *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 353–411 (for a detailed study of Stoic physics in relation to Hellenistic physics).

8

ARISTOTELIAN AND STOIC VIRTUE

Jacob Klein

Aristotle understands virtue of character to be a complex condition of the soul requiring the habituation and integration of the soul's non-rational elements under the control of practical wisdom. It is a state that leads one to choose and act correctly and also to take pleasure in right choices and actions. This analysis is deservedly familiar to most students of ethics: it has influenced many streams of philosophical thought, and it remains an object of sustained interest and discussion in its own right. But it was not predominant in the Hellenistic period, when Aristotle's treatises did yet not enjoy the wide influence they came to possess in late antiquity.[1] The Stoic conception of virtue enjoyed equal or greater prominence in the schools at Athens and figures centrally in sources that reflect the ethical debates of the period.[2] Thus in Cicero's most systematic ethical treatise, written in the first-century BCE, it is the Stoic understanding of the conventional virtues that provides a framework for discussion and sets the terms of Cicero's analysis.[3] This is all the more noteworthy, perhaps, when one considers that the Stoic account is in certain respects a reversion to an older view, a sustained development of a unitary, intellectualist analysis of virtue along lines laid down by Socrates, whose own theory comes in for criticism in Aristotle's ethical treatises.

For both historical and philosophical reasons, then, it is a matter of interest how the Aristotelian and Stoic accounts compare. Much of this interest lies in the fact that each account offers an understanding of human nature that is in important respects fundamental. Aristotle's analysis, drawing deeply on Plato, offers a revision and refinement of Plato's own complex psychology, which gives non-rational elements of the soul a fundamental role in motivation and in the ordered condition in which virtue consists. By contrast, the Stoics develop an exclusively cognitive account, arguing that virtue is a disposition of the soul's leading part and consists wholly in beliefs that underlie and explain affect and action.[4] Both accounts belong to broader, systematic theories that include a biologically-based understanding of the human person. They differ fundamentally in the degree of unity they ascribe to the soul, in their understanding of reason and cognition as sources of motivation, and in their account of the psychological condition that underwrites action of the highest sort. This chapter considers central, contrasting elements of these analyses together with some of the theoretical motivations for each. It concludes with a brief sketch of those features of the Stoic analysis that remain of philosophical interest and present a going alternative to Aristotle's approach.

Aristotle's Complex, Affective Account

The main lines of Aristotle's theory of virtue rest—as is well known—on the understanding of the human function especially developed in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the case of living organisms (and organs), Aristotle recognizes a general connection between function [*ergon*] and virtue [*aretê*], between the characteristic activity that determines what an organism is and the quality that makes it an excellence instance of its kind (*NE* 1139a15). Just as the virtue of an eye is the quality that enables it to see well, so human virtue is a quality that enables its "possessors … to perform their functions well" (*NE* 1106a16-18).[5] Aristotle conceives of human virtue as a state [*hexis*], as opposed to a feeling [*pathos*] or capacity (*dunamis; NE* 1105b19-1106a14). Since he understands the human function to be an activity of the soul in accordance with reason, he concludes that the virtues are states that enable their possessor both to reason correctly and to act well: we "fulfill our function insofar as we have practical wisdom and virtue of character" (*NE* 1144a6-7). Nature makes one more or less apt for the virtues; teaching and habituation bring about their further development and, ideally, their perfection (*NE* 1144b4-17). The virtues are in turn integral to Aristotle's account of the highest human good, which he identifies with virtuous activity: the virtue of wisdom [*sophia*] is essential to the activity of contemplation [*theôria*]; practical wisdom [*phronêsis*] and the virtues of character are essential both to a life of action and to securing the circumstances and leisure required for study (*NE* 1098a15-19, 1177a12-1179a9). Finally, Aristotle supposes that practical wisdom is integral to all of the virtues in an especially strong sense: each of the virtues of character requires practical wisdom, and practical wisdom in turn guarantees the presence of each of these (*NE* 1144b14-1145a2, 1178a16-19).

Some of the crucial features of the virtues as Aristotle understands them derive from his analysis of the human soul and ultimately from the ethical psychology set out and defended by Plato. The Platonic scheme involves an essential division of the soul into rational, appetitive, and spirited parts, and Plato characterizes the rational part, the faculty of reason, as the part that looks out for the good of the soul (*Rep*. 441e). This understanding of reason as directed towards the overall good of the agent justifies the further claims that reason, rather than appetite, should control an agent's motivations and that the best condition of the soul is one in which the desires that belong to appetite and spirit are directed toward the good that reason grasps (*Rep*. 435d9-442c7).

The fundamental elements of this analysis appear also in Aristotle's psychological account. Aristotle does not distinguish the soul's parts spatially or materially but rather by appealing to their functional roles. Like Plato, he recognizes the possibility of basic conflicts of motivation, noting that there is an element within the soul "clashing and struggling with reason" and "countering and opposing" it (*NE* 1102b15-25). On this basis he too distinguishes between rational and non-rational parts (or natures) within the soul, and he assigns appetite and spirit to the irrational part. The rational part comprises a theoretical faculty that grasps unchanging principles—it is the locus of thought "concerned with study, not with action or production" (*NE* 1139a26-30)—as well as a practical or calculative faculty, which grasps what is changeable and aims at action, determining its appropriate ends and means (*NE* 1141b10-14). Likewise the non-rational part of the soul comprises a lowest, nutritive part (which, having no role in the generation of voluntary action similarly has no part in Aristotle's analysis of virtue), as well as a part that is the source of non-rational appetites, whose habituation is essential to the virtues of character (*NE* 1103a15-1103b25). The appetitive part of the soul possesses reason "in a way," since it is capable of listening to and obeying reason, so that the non-rational desires that originate there may be

informed by rational deliberation (*NE* 1102b29-34). As in Plato's psychology, so according to Aristotle reason's right to shape and control desire rests on its capacity to grasp what is beneficial to the whole person. Practical wisdom is the "eye of the soul" (*NE* 1144a39-1144b), and the non-rational part listens to reason, Aristotle says, as to a friend or to a father (*NE* 1102b1102b31-34).

This account of the soul as a complex of functionally distinct parts underlies Aristotle's ethical theory in three basic respects. First, the basic division of the soul into rational and non-rational natures underwrites a distinction between virtues of thought and virtues of character. The virtues of thought include wisdom [*sophia*], which is the excellence of the theoretical part, and practical wisdom [*phronêsis*], which is the excellence of the calculating, deliberative part. The virtues of character, on the other hand, are states resulting from habit [*ethos*], requiring the habituation of non-rational desires and feelings in conformity with reason. These states are the source of an agent's decision [*prohairesis*], which Aristotle understands as a form of desire informed by rational deliberation and resulting in action (*NE* 1111b25-b31, *NE* 1139a21-26). The virtues of character in particular are identified as states that control action on the basis of decision, hence as character traits that promote an agent's rationally considered aims.[6] This division between virtue of character and virtue of thought answers closely to Aristotle's account of intentional action: what moves us to action is not thought alone but "goal-directed thought concerned with action" (1139a37-1139b). Thought of this sort is the result of both deliberation [*bouleusis*] and desire [*orexis*], so that deliberate action resulting from decision depends on both rational and non-rational elements within the soul (*NE* 1129a23-24).

Second, Aristotle's theory gives an important place to emotions or feelings [*pathê*] as sources of motivation in their own right. These are conditions of the soul involving pleasure and pain and having a cognitive (i.e. representational) basis. Thus anger, on Aristotle's considered account, arises especially from the appetitive part of the soul, on the basis of a perceived injury or slight, and disposes one to take pleasure in redress or revenge (*NE* 1105b22, 1125b28-1126a9).[7] In particular, according to Aristotle, feelings may originate in appearances [*phantasiai*] as well as beliefs [*doxai*], so that one may be in the grip of a non-rational feeling or emotion even when she does not accept the truth of the appearance on which it is based. This marks an important difference from the Stoic analysis, since the Stoics analyze emotions [*pathê*] as false beliefs [*doxai*] originating, like any other belief, only through assent. Whereas the Stoics suppose that the emotions are directly susceptible to the control of reason in this way, on Aristotle's account they do not clearly require any doxastic commitment on the part of the agent, and they may influence her motivations and actions both by having a distorting influence on deliberation and decision and by leading her to act contrary to correct decision even while acknowledging that it is correct (*NE* 1151a20-24, 1179b12-32).[8] Complete virtue, by contrast, is a condition in which the agent's motivations support her rational decisions, so that she decides correctly, acts on her correct decision, and does so in accordance with feelings that have been correctly habituated, so that they neither distort her judgments nor lead her to act contrary to them.[9]

Finally, in Aristotle's theory the complexity of the soul allows for gradations of character that are determined by the relations among decision, feeling and action. In particular, Aristotle recognizes the character states of continence and incontinence in addition to virtue and vice (*NE* 1145a-1152a35). Whereas virtue and vice involve the alignment of feeling and action, continence and incontinence are characterized by basic motivational conflicts. The continent (or controlled) agent deliberates and decides correctly, but although her feelings are not strong enough to distort her decisions or lead her to abandon them, they also are not fully integrated with her decisions, with the result that she decides and acts

contrary to her inclination (*NE* 1102b15-b26, 1145b9-14). The incontinent (or uncontrolled) agent also deliberates and decides correctly, but she abandons her decision through weakness, acting instead on the basis of feeling or appetite (*NE* 1149b1-b4, 1150b20).[10] Vice, although it involves no serious motivational conflict, is the most deplorable condition of character. The feelings of the vicious agent, like those of the virtuous, are aligned with her decision, but she is disposed by habit to feel and decide contrary to correct reason, so that her feelings support her mistaken judgments (*NE* 1150b35-1151a7). Aristotle recognizes an element of hopelessness in this condition, since it both leads one to act incorrectly and prevents one from understanding which actions are right: "if someone is corrupted because of pleasure and pain, no [appropriate] principle can appear to him" (*NE* 1140b17-21).[11]

The Stoics' Simple, Cognitive Account

In Plato's *Laches* (192e-196d) and *Protagoras* (349e-351b, 361b1-3), Socrates characterizes the leading virtues both as forms of theoretical knowledge [*epistêmê*] and as instances of practical wisdom [*phronêsis*]. Aristotle criticizes these claims in the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics,* arguing that virtue of character is not identical to theoretical knowledge [*epistêmê*] since it aims at action and deals with what can be otherwise (*NE* 1139a8-9, 1140a33-1140b4, 1145b23-35; EE 1216b3-21). Nor can all of the virtues be instances of practical wisdom, in Aristotle's view. Because they involve distinct domains of knowledge, and because they require the habituation and cooperation of non-rational feeling and appetite, the virtues of character centrally involve states of the non-rational part of the soul (*NE* 1144b18-30). The Stoics, on the other hand, develop in detail the Socratic supposition that virtue consists exclusively in knowledge, and they accept the assumption, plausibly ascribed to Plato's Socrates, that the knowledge in question is possible if difficult to acquire. The Stoics also accept fundamental corollaries of the Socratic account rejected by Aristotle: that virtue is a form of craft knowledge or expertise [*technê*], that this knowledge is sufficient for right action, and that one cannot act contrary to belief (and so cannot act contrary to knowledge). Zeno in particular appears to have begun from the Socratic characterizations of virtue, taking practical wisdom to be a form of theoretical knowledge [*epistêmê*] that is essential to each of the leading virtues (Plutarch, *On moral virtue* 440e-441d = LS 61B, *On Stoic self-contradictions* 1034C-E = LS 61C).[12] Subsequent heads of the Stoa worked out additional details, making Zeno's early formulations more precise and defending them against criticism.[13]

Like that of Aristotle, the Stoic analysis is both shaped and supported by a highly developed account of human psychology. The Stoics are thorough-going physicalists, accepting the principle that only bodies can causally affect other bodies. On the Chrysippian account, soul is a physical substance—*pneuma* in a certain state of tension [*tonos*]—dispersed throughout the body and thoroughly interblended with other physical elements of an animal (Origen, *On principles* 3.1.2–3 = LS 53A; Hierocles 1.5–33, 4.38–53 = LS 53B).[14] It is a cause of life to the animal—an instance of body acting on body—and explains each of the animal's essential capacities as a living being. The soul of animals is responsible both for their cohesion and integrity as living organisms and for the faculties of appearance [*phantasia*] and impulse (*hormê*; Aetius 4.21.1–4 = LS 53H). The human soul, being partly compounded of a subtler form of *pneuma*, comprises these faculties as well as that of reason [*logos*], which the Stoics locate in the soul's leading part [*hêgemonikon*] and identify with concepts [*ennoiai*] built up from experience (Galen, *On Hippocrates' and Plato's doctrines* 5.2.49, 5.3.1 = LS 53V). The acquisition of the concepts in which reason consists brings with it the capacity for propositional attitudes—for attitudes directed

towards assertibles [*axiômata*]—and also the faculty of assent [*sugkatathesis*], the reflective power either to accept or reject the contents of appearances or to suspend judgment (Stobaeus 2.88, 2–6 = LS 33I; Cicero, *Academica* 2.37–8 = LS 40O). The Stoics do not distinguish among parts of the soul in even the functional way adopted by Aristotle. Each of the soul's capacities rather inheres in the soul as a physical state or configuration [*hexis*] of its *pneuma*, and actualizations of these capacities are identified with further motions or alterations of the soul's substance (Calcidius 220 = LS 53G; Iamblichus apud Stobaeus 1.368,12–20 = LS 53K). Instances of appearance in particular are said to be alterations [*alloiôseis*] in the physical *pneuma* of the soul's leading part, which the Stoics identify with soul in the strictest sense (DL 7.49–51=LS 39A; Sextus Empiricus *Against the professors* 7.234 = LS 53F). Likewise, impulse is characterized as a motion of the soul originating in its the leading part and directed toward a prospective action envisioned by the agent (Stobaeus 2.86,17–87,6 = LS 53Q).

The Stoic understanding of virtue fits closely with this psychological account. The presence of reason as a system of concepts and the corresponding faculty of assent enable one to distinguish those appearances the Stoics characterize as kataleptic or "grasping" from those that are not and to systematically withhold assent from the latter. Kataleptic appearances [*phantasiai katalêptikai*], the Stoics say, are "of such a kind as could not arise from what is not" (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the professors* 7.402–10 = LS 40H). This means, roughly, that they are both true and characterized by a degree of clarity and precision that confirms their truth and justifies their acceptance. Non-kataleptic appearances, by contrast, are either false, on the one hand, or true but unjustified on the other. The Stoics do not take appearances of this kind to especially rare. It is likely that they regarded most perceptual appearances as kataleptic. But they further maintain that it is in principle possible, albeit exceedingly difficult, to achieve a cognitive condition that is comprised exclusively of beliefs resulting from assent to kataleptic appearances. *Epistêmê*, the form of knowledge in which virtue consists, is the extremely demanding condition in which one's beliefs are both sufficiently comprehensive and exclusively kataleptic, in which individual cognitions reinforce one another so that the entire structure is systematic, secure, and free from error (Stobaeus 2.111, 18–112,8 = LS 41G; Stobaeus 2.73,16–74,3 = LS 41H). This is the form of knowledge the Stoics identify with virtue, and they describe it in various ways. Plutarch reports a common Stoic definition of virtue as "a certain character and power of the soul's commanding faculty, engendered by reason, or rather, a character which is itself consistent, firm, and unchangeable by reason" (Plutarch, *On moral virtue* 440e-441d = LS 61B). A further definition identifies virtue as "a fixed character [*diathesis*] of the soul, one that is in harmony with itself in all of life" (Stobaeus 2.60, 31–33; my translation).

Some of the distinctive and supposedly paradoxical features of the Stoic view are best understood by reference to this epistemic account. The virtuous agent or sage [*sophos*] is vanishingly rare—as rare as the phoenix, in the Stoic slogan—because the cognitive condition in which virtue consists is itself exceptionally demanding and exceedingly rare. So too the Stoics famously, even notoriously, regard virtue as an all-or-nothing affair, as something one either does or does not have. Like Aristotle, they take the virtues to be states [*hexeis*], but they further characterize them as states or conditions that we might call fixed characters [*diatheseis*], conditions that, like the straightness of a stick or the completeness of a line of poetry, do not admit of degrees (Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Categories* 237, 25–238, 20 = LS 47S; Stobaeus 2.65, 7–10). This too is an upshot of the Stoic identification of virtue with *epistêmê*. Because any false or unjustified belief can undermine the accuracy and security of the whole, the Stoics conceive of any set of cognitions that includes beliefs falling short of *katalêpsis* as unstable, hence as something

less than *epistêmê*. In the way that a stone structure either is or is not an arch, so a set of beliefs either is or is not an instance of *epistêmê*, on the Stoic account. Likewise the process of acquiring *epistêmê* may be thought of on the analogy of building an arch whose components are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the completed structure. Just as fixity and firmness do not belong to a partial arch but supervene only when the structure is complete, so too *epistêmê* is firm and stable in a way that isolated beliefs are not.[15] No piece of *epistêmê* can be dislodged by argument once the structure of cognitions is complete. It is "a cognition [*katalêpsis*] which is secure and irreversible by reason" (Stobaeus 2.73, 16–74, 3 = LS 41H).

The Stoics also develop the Socratic supposition—logically distinct from the claim that virtue is knowledge—that knowledge is sufficient to guarantee right action. Impulse [*hormê*] in rational animals is a product of assent to appearances (or impressions) that have, as part of their propositional content, the representation of a prospective action as *kathêkon*, as appropriate to perform (Stobaeus 2.86,17–87,6 = LS 53Q). No impulse can arise without assent to hormetic appearances [*phantasiai hormêtikai*] of this kind. Because the beliefs on which action is based are truth-evaluable, there is a strict connection between true belief and right action: the secure knowledge of the sage guarantees that she will assent only to hormetic appearances that are true, hence that each of her actions will be correct. Because the Stoics suppose that the form of knowledge in which virtue consists is sufficient to control action, they regard—and vividly describe—this knowledge as a source or spring of appropriate actions (Stobaeus 2.69, 23–2.69, 34). Moreover, the actions that issue from virtue are not merely appropriate or extensionally correct. They are also perfect or complete, characterized by their origin not simply in *katalêpsis* but in the much stronger condition of *epistêmê*. This means that in addition to being the appropriate actions to perform, they are correctly motivated, consistent, and perfectly stable. Just as the cognitions that comprise *epistêmê* acquire modal features that do not belong to isolated beliefs, so actions of this kind—*katorthômata*—are non-accidentally correct, acquiring a counterfactual stability that does not belong to actions that are incidentally appropriate but do not originate in virtue (Stobaeus 5.906, 18–907, 5 = LS 59I; Stobaeus 2.93, 14–18 = LS 59K). The pattern of action that results from virtue is characterized as a good flow of life [*euhroia biou*], free from the mistakes and mental disturbances of the emotions [*pathê*] and perfectly secure (Stobaeus 2.77, 16–27 = LS 63A).

A final feature of the Stoic account should be mentioned, in part because it is a useful reminder that the Stoic understanding of virtue as a state of character is continuous with a broader and quite extensive physical theory. At least some of the older Stoics—probably including Chrysippus—maintained that the virtues are themselves living beings and animals in their own right (Stobaeus 2.64, 32–2.65, 4; Seneca, *Letters* 113.24 = LS 61E). The fullest surviving discussion of this thesis makes clear that it (along with other paradoxical-sounding Stoic claims) was a target of ridicule in antiquity. Why did the Stoics hold this doctrine? One plausible thought is that it is a consequence of their distinctive understanding of the relation between soul and body, which differs both from Plato's strongly dualist account and from the functionalist characterization of soul developed by Aristotle. The Stoics suppose that the soul in which the virtues inhere, being a physical substance, animates the body by being thoroughly intermixed with it in the peculiar relation of total blending theorized by Chrysippus (Hierocles 1.5–33, 4.38–53 = LS 53B). The faculties of appearance, impulse, and assent belong in the first instance to the soul itself, as alterations and modifications of the *pneuma* that suffuses the body and holds it together. They belong to the body with which the soul is interblended only in the second instance, as causal consequences of its relation to soul. On such an account the compound animal inherits the

essential capacities for life from a soul that already possesses these capacities and their associated functions in the fullest sense. Because they identify virtue with the leading part of the rational soul, the Stoics intend the surprising claim that virtue is an animal—possessing in its own right the qualities essential to the compound animal—to be understood quite literally.[16]

Stoic virtue, then, is a set of true and justified beliefs that, when integrated in systematic whole, acquire the fixity and firmness that belong to the highest grade of knowledge, resulting in action that is infallibly appropriate, correctly motivated, and counterfactually stable. These cognitions are physical alterations of the leading part of the soul, which is itself alive and sustains the compound of soul and body. Collectively they are identified with the soul's leading part "disposed in a certain way" (Seneca, *Letters* 113.2 = LS 29B). The Stoic analysis is a cognitive one in that it makes virtue depend exclusively on attitudes whose function is to represent the world. It is simple insofar as it denies the presence of motivations in the soul that are non-rational, which are not controlled by representations to which the agent has given her assent.

The Scope and Content of Stoic Virtue

With Aristotle and Plato, the Stoics recognize the conventional or leading virtues—practical wisdom [*phronêsis*], wisdom [*sophia*], moderation [*sôphrosunê*], and bravery [*andreia*]—as well as a range of specific virtues organized under each of these. Aristotle's inclusion of qualities such as wit and friendliness in his discussion of virtues of character is striking, but the Stoics are even more thoroughgoing in this respect, including even such qualities as convivial and erotic virtue on their list of human excellences (Stobaeus 2.65, 15–2.66, 4). That it sounds strange to count such mundane traits as *virtue*s reflects the narrower semantic range of our own term 'virtue,' which is restricted to distinctively ethical qualities, but it also reflects the Stoics' understanding of the scope and power of reason as a faculty with the capacity to transform every domain of human life. Stoic characterizations of the sage [*sophos*] as the only possessor of such virtues and the only true practitioner of various crafts can seem obscurantist and pessimistic (since almost no one is a sage), and the Stoics' ancient critics often present them in that light. But the point of such claims is not, presumably, to develop a detailed theoretical portrait of the sage, but rather to emphasize the transformative power of reason and to offer rationalized (and sometimes revisionary) accounts of appropriate action in various domains.[17] Characterizations of the sage's virtues are also optimistic in that they are statements of what perfected reason can in principle achieve, of reason's capacity to reform and refine every facet of human endeavor with technical precision, on the basis of craft-like knowledge, in conformity with what is good.

What is the knowledge in which Stoic virtue consists? The Stoics do not accept Aristotle's close distinction between wisdom [*sophia*] and practical wisdom [*phronêsis*], but rather, in clear contrast to Aristotle, they include *phronêsis* as one part or aspect of the knowledge [*epistêmê*] that is also the wisdom [*sophia*] required for sagehood (Stobaeus 2.71, 15–72, 6 = LS 60K; 2.59, 4–60, 24 = LS 61H).[18] The Stoics identify each of the leading virtues, including practical wisdom [*phronêsis*], with *epistêmê*, where *epistêmê* encompasses both the theoretical and practical domains. Thus practical wisdom is "*epistêmê* of what should and should not be done and of neutral actions, or the *epistêmê* of things that are good and bad and neutral as applied to a creature whose nature is social" (Stobaeus 2.59, 4–60, 2 = LS 61H). So too justice is "the *epistêmê* concerned with distributing individual deserts" (Stobaeus 2.59, 4–60, 2 = LS 61H). The Stoics moreover identify each of

the specific leading virtues with knowledge of the same set of theorems [*theorêmata*], while ascribing to each virtue a distinct subset of these theorems as distinctive and primary, characteristic of a distinctive domain of action.

Because the knowledge required for each virtue is also sufficient for each of the other virtues, the Stoics agree with Aristotle that the virtues entail one another.[19] But they also maintain, as Aristotle does not, that one "who does any action in accordance with one [of the virtues] does so in accordance with them all" (Plutarch, *On Stoic self-contradictions* 1046e-f = LS 61F). Justification for this stronger claim seems again to rest on the thought that virtuous actions, being the product of perfected reason, instantiate counterfactual qualities that merely appropriate actions—actions that are merely extensionally correct—do not. For a token action to be perfect in the way envisioned by the Stoics, it must be true of the agent who performs it that she would not have performed an action of that kind in relevantly different circumstances and would have performed such an action in relevantly similar ones. In this way the Stoics require that action, like belief, be non-accidentally correct. This in turn requires it to have, as part of its causal basis, the full range of cognitions the Stoics regard as essential to all of the virtues.

Most surviving Stoic characterizations of virtue are at high level of abstraction, so that it is difficult to say with precision how early Stoics understood the detailed content of the knowledge they regard as sufficient for virtuous action. In contrast to Socrates, the Stoics do not suppose that virtue is itself knowledge of good and bad. Rather, as in their definition of *phronêsis,* they identify it with knowledge that enables one to perform actions that are in fact good and avoid actions that are in fact bad. The Stoics further characterize such knowledge as knowledge of nature, of what accords with nature and the natural order. What this means in detail, and what the older Stoics in particular took this to mean, remain a matter of debate. One uncertain question is whether and to what extent the older Stoics identified the knowledge required for virtue with a theoretical understanding of nature—with an understanding that might enable the sage, for instance, to act rightly by fitting herself into a pattern of events—or whether they thought of it in terms of more familiar-sounding ethical principles, perhaps to the effect that actions of a certain type are characteristically appropriate or inappropriate to creatures of a certain sort.

Evidence for both lines of thought is present in sources that bear on this question. Chrysippus' own account of the end identifies it with "living in accordance with experience of what happens by nature" (DL 7.87–9 = LS 57A). According to Posidonius, the end consists in "living as a student of the truth and order of the whole, and helping to promote this as far as possible" (Clement, *Miscellanies* 2.21.129.4–5 = LS 63J). A formulation frequently attributed to the Stoics characterizes wisdom [*sophia*]—the knowledge of the sage—as knowledge [*epistêmê*] of divine and the human matters (Aetius I, Preface 2 = LS 26A; Seneca *Letters* 89.4–5 = LS26G).[20] Even more suggestively, two sources list knowledge of physics itself as a form of virtue [*arête phusikê*]: Aetius I, Preface 2 = LS 26A; DL 7.92. These formulas suggest that the Stoics regarded theoretical principles—perhaps describing regularities or patterns of events—as an important part of the sage's understanding, and that they aimed to give content to the notion of virtue by suggesting that the sage must study the order of nature as a whole. This is plausibly understood to be part of an early Stoic effort to provide substantive content to the notion of what is good, and to offer definitions of the form that Socrates' failed to find, knowledge of which would guarantee right action.[21]

But if the Stoics understood theoretical knowledge of nature to be a source of specific action-guiding principles and judgments, no surviving source explains how they thought such knowledge could be applied in a way that determines and motivates appropriate action. We know that every impulse is precipitated by the judgment that some envisioned action is appropriate [*kathêkon*], but how does the sage arrive at practical judgments of this form on the basis of high-level principles about the natural world? Our sources also admit of a less theoretical understanding. The discussions of appropriation action that figure in Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus suggest that ethical deliberation includes readily recognizable considerations, that one looks to personal relations and social roles as well as to one's own nature, and begins from principles that are clearly normative. The Stoics themselves may not have viewed these lines of thought as exclusive. It is likely that Stoic thinkers regarded much conventional ethical wisdom as specifying ways of acting in accordance with nature. Pressed for a justification of the quiet acceptance of death or the obligation to aid one's friends and family, a sage might ultimately invoke higher-level principles, characterizing such action-types as commensurate with the regularities or present in rational nature. But the ordinary deliberations of practicing Stoics in antiquity no doubt looked to more proximate considerations.

Virtue, Skill, and the Highest Good

The Socrates of Plato's early dialogues supposes that virtue is a kind of craft [*technê*], involving knowledge of the form possessed by the skilled craftsmen of Athens. In particular, he assumes that virtue is a form of knowledge that is productive and that its product is happiness [*eudaimonia*].[22] Though Aristotle appeals to the model of crafts to illustrate various features of virtue, he does not accept the strict identification of virtue with craft-knowledge. This is partly because he does not suppose that the deliberations of the virtuous agent admit of the same precision as the methods and procedures of a craft, but also because he distinguishes the aim of virtue from those of the crafts. The strict or unqualified aim of virtue is virtuous activity, which is a final good. By contrast, the products of the crafts are not themselves final goods, but only means to further ends. Moreover, virtuous activity depends on a virtuous disposition, with success conditions that do not apply to crafts (*NE* 1105a27-1105b6). Hence although crafts remain analogous to virtue of character in key respects (both involve deliberation, for instance, and are acquired in similar ways), they differ in the nature of their methods and with respect to the ends at which they aim.[23]

The Stoics, however, accept and develop the Socratic supposition that virtue is indeed a kind of craft knowledge. According to a definition ascribed to Zeno, a *technê* is "a systematic collection of cognitions unified by practice for some goal advantageous in life" (Olympiodorus, *On Plato's Gorgias* 12.1 = LS 42A). Virtue is the *technê tou biou*—the art of life or of living well. The virtues are characterized as goods that are both final and productive, final because they are themselves parts of happiness, productive because they produce virtuous activity, which makes happiness complete (Stobaeus 2.71,15–72,6 = LS 60M). The Stoics' identification of virtue as a craft partly depends on their view that the actions that complete happiness are the causal results of virtue, so that virtue has a distinct product in the manner of the productive crafts. It may also depend on the thought that the impulses and actions of the sage, resulting from her secure knowledge of appropriate action, are characterized by the same regularity and precision as the products of other crafts, so that virtuous action can be achieved with an exactitude that Aristotle's conception does not allow.

Because they take happiness to consist in nothing but virtue and virtuous activity, the Stoics regard virtue as sufficient for happiness.[24] The perfect actions of the sage are the causal results of her virtue, flowing from her character as water from a spring or heat from what is hot. "The wise man," says Philo, "desires [the actions that] have their origin in virtue, and these, being what he is, he cannot fail to obtain" (*Every good man is free,* 454; trans. F. H. Colson).

Conclusion

The Stoic conception of virtue and the moral psychology on which it depends have had considerable influence on Western moral thought. One such line of influence can be traced from the Stoic claim that virtue and virtuous activity are the only goods to Kantian notions of duty and the motive of duty. The Stoic analysis anticipates the axiology of Kantian claims about the unconditioned value of the good will, and both the Stoic and Kantian accounts draw corresponding conclusions about the appropriate structure of motivation. But the psychology of virtue as the Stoics conceive it remains of philosophical interest in other respects, some of which answer closely to points at which the Stoics depart from Aristotle. Aristotle does not make the comparative priority of reason and desire in intentional action perfectly clear: though he says that thought alone does not move an agent to action, it is open to interpretation whether and to what extent the deliberations of the rational part may give rise to desires in their own right and hence determine the end at which an agent aims, or whether the role of rational deliberation is more restricted, focused more narrowly on means to achieving ends that are not themselves determined by practical wisdom.[25]

Aristotle's account of virtue thus leaves room for a measure of disagreement about the division of labor among the various parts of the soul and about the roles of its rational and non-rational elements in the generation of action. There is no scope for such disagreement in connection with the Stoic account, which places all motivation and action firmly under the control of reason and regards this faculty as the sole origin of action. We can summarize this point of difference by noting a critical comment by the author of the *Magna Moralia* on the Socratic account of virtue:

> According to Socrates all the virtues belong to the rational part of the soul. So it follows that in making the virtues instances of knowledge [*epistêmas*] he does away with the non-rational part of the soul, and in doing this he does away both with feeling [*pathos*] and with character [*êthos*]. Hence in this respect he did not deal correctly with the virtues.
>
> (*Magna Moralia* 1182a19–24; my translation)

This Aristotelian criticism of Socrates applies equally to the Stoic position. But this first difference between Aristotle's conception and that of the Stoics is in some respects superficial. More fundamental, and of greater philosophical interest, is the question whether action ultimately originates in cognition alone, so that attitudes that are wholly representational in nature are materially sufficient for action. Here again Aristotle is open to interpretation, and the interpretation turns in part on the degree to which Aristotle supposes that the non-rational parts of the soul are themselves cognitive faculties, capable of forming and accepting representations of the world in their own right. By contrast, the Stoics affirm that motivation and action are comprehensively controlled by assent to representational

attitudes, so that an agent's motivations and actions must always answer, strictly, to the way she takes the world to be.

This fundamental supposition, traceable to Socrates, explains the tremendous premium the Stoics place on *katalêpsis* and *epistêmê* and the care with which they develop their account of these cognitive conditions. Human wellbeing stands or falls, in their estimation, on the basis of a representation of the world that is both accurate and secure, and on that basis alone. The Stoics understand virtue, in the final analysis, to be a secure understanding of rational nature, and they make human happiness depend on perfect conformity of the representational faculties of the human soul to the rational order of the world itself. On such an account, it is natural to view reasons for action as objective features of the natural order, to be grasped by the faculty of reason, and to identify right action and motivation with just such an accurate grasp. This is the understanding of virtue developed by the older Stoics in the century after Aristotle. It fits closely with their objectivist and naturalist account of ethics, and it is a central part of their important legacy to ethical thought.[26]

Notes

1 See Long 1968; Sandbach 1985; Inwood 1986; Nielsen 2012; Irwin (forthcoming).
2 See for example Cicero, *On ends*, Books 3–5; Plutarch *On Stoic self-contradictions* and *On common conceptions*; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Supplement to on the soul,* Section 20 = 159.15–168.20 Bruns.
3 Cicero, *On duties*.
4 Here and throughout, I use the term "cognitive" to characterize mental attitudes that have a representational "direction of fit."
5 Unless otherwise noted, translations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* follow Terence Irwin's translation, with minor alternations.
6 On the virtues of character see especially Lorenz 2009.
7 Compare *Rhetoric* 1178a31-1178b9.
8 On Aristotle's understanding of feelings or emotions [*pathê*], see further Dow 2009, Moss 2012: 69–92, Pearson 2014.
9 At NE 1147b13 Aristotle says that the incontinent agent lacks appropriate cognition. This qualification appears to bring his position closer to that of Socrates and the Stoics.
10 Aristotle calls this kind of incontinence weakness (*astheneia*; NE 1150b20). He further distinguishes a form of incontinence in which, because of feelings, one fails to deliberate at all. This is impetuosity (*propeteia*; NE 1150b23-25).
11 Cf. NE 1113a30-b2, 1144a201144b, 1151a15-17, 1176b25-28.
12 Unless otherwise noted, translations of Stoic sources follow those of Long and Sedley 1987 (hereafter LS).
13 For discussion of the early Stoic conception of virtue, see especially Cooper 1998a: 91–107, Schofield 1984; Schofield 2013. On the Socratic tenor of early Stoic thought, see Long 1988.
14 In contrast to Aristotle's view, plants are without soul [*psuchê*], in the Stoic scheme, and possess instead a nature [*phusis*], which explains their integrity and controls their processes of growth and nutrition.
15 Diogenes Laertius attributes the image of an arch to the Stoic Hecaton (DL 7.90).
16 John Cooper (2004: 320–4) offers this account.
17 Vogt 2008: Chapter 3, Annas 2009: 279–81.
18 As Stephen Menn puts it, in the case of the Stoics, "a single kind of knowledge plays both the role of Aristotelian *sophia* and the role of Aristotelian *phronêsis*" (1995: 4).
19 This thesis seems to have been a point of contention among early followers of Zeno. Zeno's pupil Aristo developed the claim in a strongly unitary and Socratic direction. Zeno himself, on the other hand, appears to have recognized a plurality of virtues while upholding the doctrine that one cannot possess a single virtue without possessing them all. See Schofield 2013.
20 See also Seneca, *Letters* 31.8.
21 See especially Menn 1995.
22 See for example Plato's *Euthyphro*, 13a-e, 14c-e; *Laches* 194c-199e; *Euthydemus*, 288d-291d; *Charmides*, 174b-176a.
23 See especially the references and commentary in Irwin 1999: 321.

24 It is not easy to recover the arguments that led the older Stoics to the conclusion that virtue is sufficient for happiness. Especially useful discussions of this matter are Cooper 1998b: 442–4 and Brennan 2005: Chapters 8–9.
25 For discussion see especially Moss 2011, Irwin 1975 and Irwin 2017.
26 I am grateful to Simon Shogry and Whitney Schwab for insights that helped me frame this chapter and to Laura Tomlinson for further improving it.

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Lorenz, H. (2009) "Virtue of Character in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 37, 177–212. (An excellent recent study of the virtues of character in Aristotle.)

Menn, S. (1995), "Physics as a Virtue," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium of Ancient Philosophy* 11, 1–34. (An illuminating discussion of philosophical motivations for the Stoic theory of virtue.)

9

SOCRATIC IGNORANCE AND ETHICS IN THE STOA

René Brouwer

Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy

This chapter deals with the reception of accounts about Socrates by the first Stoics in the 3rd century BCE. When Zeno of Citium (334–262), the founder of Stoicism, started his own school in the painted "colonnade" or "Stoa" on the Athenian marketplace at the beginning of the 4th century, Socrates (469–399) had been dead for almost a hundred years. Even so, according to the anecdote preserved by Diogenes Laertius, at 7.3, Zeno, upon his arrival from Cyprus around 312, is said to have become interested in pursuing wisdom by hearing about Socrates: "After having heard the bookseller reading about Socrates in a bookshop and Zeno having expressed his interest in Socrates, Crates of Thebes passed by, whereupon the bookseller suggested to Zeno that he should 'follow [*parakolouthēson*] that man!'" The bookseller was surely right about connecting Crates and Socrates: Crates of Thebes (360–280) had been a pupil of Diogenes of Sinope, himself a follower of Socrates. Zeno indeed became a student of Crates, a Cynic, who like Socrates and his own teacher, Diogenes of Sinope, propagated the simple life, disregarding conventions. A string of other teachers followed, all in one way or another inspired by Socrates: after Crates of Thebes, Zeno studied with Stilpo of Megara (DL 7.24, *SVF* 1.278, fr. 4 Giannantoni) and with Diodorus Cronus (DL 7.25, fr. 3 Giannantoni),[1] who—according to Diogenes Laertius 7.25—were both interested in the Socratic method of arguing correctly. Thereafter he studied with Polemo of Athens (314–276) in Plato's Academy (DL 7.2, Polemo fr. 85 Gigante, *SVF* 1.1 and DL 7.25, Polemo fr. 88 Gigante, *SVF* 1.5), where he will yet again have learned about Socrates.[2] According to the formulation by the Epicurean Philodemus of Gadara (first century BCE), *On the Stoics*, col. 13.3 Dorandi, Zeno and his pupils even went as far as that they were apparently "willing to be called Socratics." "Willing" suggests that Zeno may not actively have endorsed this name—for the obvious reason that other thinkers also claimed to have been inspired by Socrates—but it offers further evidence for the inspiration Socrates apparently exercised on the early Stoics.

Among the other major Hellenistic schools that were inspired by Socrates, the Academics, and even the Epicureans, can be mentioned (for other schools see De Luise and Farinetti 1997, Brouwer 2008). According to Epicurus of Samos (341–271) and followers, Socrates was the perfect anti-hero, the embodiment of dishonesty, as someone

who claimed not to know, but in fact simply did not want to share his knowledge with people whom he called his friends.[3] In Plato's Academy, the influence Socrates still exerted in the third century BCE is unmistakable, even more so when a couple of years after Polemo's death in 269, his pupil Arcesilaus of Pitane (318–242) became head of the school.[4] Under his leadership the Academy would make its "skeptical turn," for which the questioning Socrates, not satisfied with the answers that others provided him with, was the model. For the Academics Socrates was to be followed as someone who refuted the opinions of his interlocutors—in the formulation later put forward by Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.67 (test. 5a Mette), Arcesilaus initiated this "really Socratic practice" [*Socraticum maxime*]. For almost two centuries, the Academy would remain skeptical, with Carneades of Cyrene (213–129), next to Arcesilaus himself, as one of its most important representatives (Dillon 2019, 61–78). Only from Antiochus of Ascalon (125–68) onwards, the Academy would discard its skepticism, and the focus would shift towards the exegesis of Plato's writings for their own sake, as the source for Platonism, which then was developed as a dogmatic system of thought.[5]

With Zeno and Arcesilaus both interested in Socrates, the antagonism between the Academy and the Stoa in the third century BCE can thus be reconstructed as a debate about Socrates' legacy. The Academics offered their interpretation of Socrates as a skeptical thinker, whereas the Stoics offered a rather different interpretation of Socrates as a thinker above all interested in human matters or ethics. Perhaps this debate already started within the Academy itself, when Arcesilaus and Zeno both studied together under Polemo.[6] From the viewpoint of the Academic skeptics, their debate with the Stoics about the criterion of truth is such a Socratic conversation. Against Epicurus, who had presumably introduced the topic of the criterion and had boldly declared that "all impressions are true,"[7] Zeno proposed that only "cognitive" impressions are true, that is "an impression arising from what is" (see e.g. DL 7.54, *SVF* 2.105, LS 40A). Arcesilaus refuted Zeno's proposal, arguing that it is also possible to have a true impression of something that does not exist. The Stoics made various attempts to modify Zeno's definition, which the Academics all attempted to refute in the Socratic manner.

Zeno and his followers criticized the Academics for this one-sided interpretation of Socrates as someone only refuting the opinions of others. Zeno's fellow-traveller Aristo of Chios (320–250) even accused Arcesilaus of being a kind of anti-Socrates, as "a corrupter of the youth" (*phtorea tōn neōn*, DL 4.40, *SVF* 1.435), a clear allusion to the accusation brought up against Socrates in his trial that he would have "corrupted the youth" (*diaphtheirōn tōn neōn*, Plato, *Apology* 24b). Even if explicitly directed at Arcesilaus' apparently somewhat unrestrained sexual appetite ("a shameless teacher of sexual license," as Diogenes Laertius has it in the continuation of the passage), it can also be read as directed at someone who corrupted his students by making them focus on refutation only.[8] For the early Stoics, for Zeno and Aristo alike, Socrates should rather be followed as a thinker with convictions, who in the end was prepared to die for them.[9]

In this chapter I will develop the line of thought that the early Stoics exploited the Socratic tradition in order to present Socrates as more than just a sceptical thinker, such that in following him they were able to develop their doctrinal ethics. I will thus focus on Socrates' ethical convictions, which were unusual, and are therefore often referred to as opinions that go against common opinion or—in the literal sense in Greek—"paradoxes," such as "virtue is knowledge" or "all virtues are interconnected." Before discussing these Socratic paradoxes and how these paradoxes can contribute to a better understanding of Stoicism, in the next section I will first discuss two preliminary problems: the extant sources on Stoicism and the problem of the historical Socrates.

Socrates and the Stoics: Two Preliminary Problems

A reconstruction of Stoic thought from the point of view of Socratic ethics is problematic for two reasons. First, with regard to the Stoics the sorry state of the sources has to be noted. Of the treatises written by the early Stoics, none has survived: the *Hymn to Zeus* by Cleanthes of Assos, Zeno's successor as head of the school, is the only somewhat longer extant text that is explicitly attributed to an early Stoic: 39 lines in all.[10] Full accounts as to how they interpreted Socrates and how this interpretation relates to their own system of thought have not survived (that is, assuming there were any, of course). For a reconstruction of Stoic doctrine, or how the Stoics relied on accounts about Socrates, we thus have to rely on secondary, often hostile sources.

Second, the problem of the sources about or even by Socrates makes such a reconstruction even more difficult. With the exception perhaps of a lost hymn to the gods Apollo and Artemis and a fable in the manner of Aesop—"as some maintain," according to the Byzantine *Suda* S 829 (LM D1)—Socrates did not write anything himself. For those who had no personal recollections of his life and thought, like the early Stoics, accounts by others were needed on the basis of which Socrates' life and thought could be interpreted. At the beginning of the third century BCE, there were clearly far more possibilities to find out about Socrates than is the case in the twenty-first century. Those who wanted to know more about Socrates could first of all rely on an oral tradition, next to many texts that had been written about Socrates by his admirers. Unfortunately, most of these texts are now lost, as Giannantoni's collection of the extant evidence on Socrates and the Socratics attests (Giannantoni 1990).

For the oral tradition about Socrates, Zeno could surely rely on his teachers Crates, Stilpo, Diodorus, and Polemo. For the written tradition he could fall back on Xenophon and Plato, two admirers of Socrates, whose work has fortunately survived the ages. Xenophon wrote extensively about Socrates, esp. his *Recollections* of *Socrates*, Plato's dialogues are in fact recollections of Socrates, too. In his *Tusculan Disputations*, at 5.11, Cicero refers to these texts in this sense as "Plato's written recollections [*Platonis memoria et litteris consecrata*]." From Diogenes Laertius 1.16, it can be inferred that *Recollections* became in fact a new "Socratic" genre.[11] Among those who wrote *Recollections* are presumably Stilpo,[12] and also the early Stoics themselves. Zeno wrote his *Recollections of Crates* (DL 7.2, *SVF* 1.41, 273), Aristo of Chios wrote a *Recollections*, in three volumes (DL 7.163, *SVF* 1.333), just like Zeno's pupil Persaeus of Citium, presumably writing about Zeno and Stilpo (see DL 7.36, *SVF* 1.435), [13] and also Cleanthes appeared to have contributed to the genre (see below, Socrates and Stoic Ethics: The Interrelatedness of the Virtues).

Even though both Xenophon and Plato wrote recollections of Socrates, their accounts of his life and thought are somewhat different. According to Diogenes Laertius 3.34, Xenophon and Plato both wrote similar narratives, "as if out of rivalry [*diaphiloneikountes*]: a *Symposium, Apology of Socrates*, and their *Recollections* that deal with ethical matters." The differences concern the manner of presentation by both authors: in his accounts Xenophon brings himself in, whereas Plato is more self-effacing.[14] The differences also relate to how they present Socrates himself: Xenophon makes Socrates into someone who investigates together with others (see e.g. *Recollections* 4.6.1), whereas Plato presents Socrates as someone who above all refutes opinions that others bring up (Vander Waerdt 1994: 12). What is more, Plato also makes Socrates the mouth-piece of his own doctrines, as e.g. with the independent existence of forms, of which Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1078b30 informs us that this doctrine was not held by Socrates (Denyer 2019: 23).

In modern scholarship it has been suggested that the Stoics would have relied on Xenophon's accounts about Socrates (Long 1988: 162–3, repr. 1996, 20–21, cf. Brouwer 2014: 172–4). As we have already seen, according to the anecdote, Zeno started his search for wisdom by becoming acquainted with Xenophon's *Recollections*, book 2. However, just as with his "Socratic" teachers, where in his striving for wisdom he had several of them,[15] also with regard to the written texts about Socrates, it seems more likely that the voracious Zeno relied not just on Xenophon's texts, but on others, too, including Plato's.[16] As for Plato, the Stoics were especially interested in Plato's accounts of Socrates' last days before he drank the hemlock: from the preparation for his trial in the *Euthyphro*, the trial itself in the *Apology*, and to his final days spent in prison, in the *Crito* and the *Phaedo*. [17] There is evidence, too, that they used the characterizations of the "real" Socrates Plato offered in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. At the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, 229e-230a, Plato offers a portrait of Socrates, which with its theme of searching for self-knowledge has often been acknowledged as "genuinely Socratic" (Rowe 1988: 140; cf. Brouwer 2014: 149–163).

Even if the Stoics used Plato's texts as recollections of Socrates, they were at the same time critical of at least parts of these accounts. According to Plutarch (2nd half of the first century CE), *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1034e (*SVF* 1.260), Zeno severely criticized notably Plato's *Republic*, "against which he continued to write." He argued against the division of the citizens into three groups in Plato's ideal city, instead proposing in his own *Republic* a city consisting of perfect human beings only.[18] Furthermore, while stipulating the parallel between city and soul (Zeno presumably followed the metaphor of the large and small print in Plato's *Republic* 369a, see Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 31, *SVF* 1.263), Zeno also criticized Plato's tripartition of the soul, proposing a monistic account of the soul instead, consisting of reason only (see DL 7.175, *SVF* 1.135; cf. Brouwer 2014: 73–75). He also rejected Plato's doctrine of the forms as having an independent existence; according to Zeno, these are but "figments" [*ennoemata*] of the soul (Stobaeus 1.136.21–7.6, *SVF* 1.65, LS 30A).

In following Socrates, then, the Stoics appeared to have used the rich traditions available to them, but did so in a cautious manner. Needless to say, given the state of the sources, in terms of what has been lost and of what is still extant, the following discussion of the early Stoics' ethical doctrines against the background of Socratic ethics will inevitably have to remain speculative to an extent.[19] Nevertheless, this double reconstruction, the first one of the Stoics reconstructing Socrates, the second of the reconstruction thereof, may shed yet another, hopefully clarifying light on Stoic thought.

Socrates and Stoic Ethics: Physics?

In all accounts about Socrates, his interest in ethics stands out. See, for example, the account by Xenophon, *Recollections* 1.1.16: "He always discoursed about human matters" or—surely not an eye-witness account, but one which captures Socrates' interest nicely—Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.10:

> Socrates was the first to call the search for wisdom down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men and bring her also into their homes and compel her to ask questions about life and conduct and things good and evil.

Socrates' interest in ethics implied that he was not interested in physics as such. In Plato's *Phaedo* 96a (LM D7), Socrates declares to have discarded the study of nature under the guidance of Anaxagoras. However, this need not mean that he was not interested in nature

at all. Already in the *Phaedo*-passage this is stated as much. Xenophon, *Recollections* 4.3 makes clear that in discussing the rationality of the universe Socrates was interested in physics, at least in so far as it is relevant for ethics.[20] In his account on Socrates, Diogenes Laertius 2.45 (LM D8) presents Socrates' interest in physics thus: "It seems to me that Socrates discoursed on physics as well as ethics, at least where he converses about divine providence; Xenophon mentions this too, though he declares that Socrates talked only about ethics" (tr. Mensch).

The Stoics obviously shared Socrates' interest in ethics—and physics. They divided their study of wisdom into three parts, that is ethics, physics and logic (see DL 7.39, *SVF* 1.45, 2.37, LS 26B).[21] The parts are organically interconnected: they compared the study with a living being, likening logic to bones and sinews, ethics to the fleshier parts, and physics to the soul (DL 7.40, *SVF* 2.38). For ethics physics is thus needed, for which Zeno even relied on Socrates. According to Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 9.110 (*SVF* 1.113), Zeno used Xenophon's account in arguing for the rationality of the universe. This must be a reference to Xenophon, *Recollections* 4.3.[22]

Both Socrates' and the Stoics' ethical doctrines are unconventional and are therefore often referred to as *paradoxes*, in the literal sense in Greek as "doctrines that go against common opinion," in the ancient sources and in the modern scholarly literature.[23] For the ancient sources see Cicero, *On the Paradoxes of the Stoics* 4 (not in *SVF*), who derives the Stoic interest in paradoxes back to Socrates:

> These doctrines are surprising and they run counter to common opinion (*opinionem omnium*)—the Stoics themselves actually term them paradoxes [in his Latin text Cicero brings up the Greek word παράδοξα]; and I wrote with the greater pleasure because these Stoic paradoxes appear to me to be in the highest degree Socratic, and far and away the truest.[24] (tr. King, modified)

Among the unconventional convictions brought up by Socrates are the overall importance of virtue, virtue is knowledge, the interrelatedness of the virtues, and Socrates' self-declared ignorance (or his disavowal of knowledge).[25] It is these convictions that will be discussed here; I will leave out more political topics, which include natural law and cosmopolitanism, for which respectively DeFilippo 1994 and Brown 2000 can be consulted.

Socrates and Stoic Ethics: Virtue

Within ethics, Socrates considered virtue to be the most important topic, as Xenophon, *Recollections* 1.1.16 (LM D9) has it, rather than wealth or reputation, as Plato, *Apology* 29d-e adds:

> Athenians, I am grateful and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: "Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honours as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?" (tr. Grube)

The Stoics interpreted Socrates' interest in virtue as that virtue is the only thing needed for the good life. In the modern literature this is taken to mean either that virtue is identical to the good life or that virtue is sufficient for it.[26] Whether identical or sufficient, the Stoics would eventually enter into a debate with the Aristotelians, who maintained that virtue is only a necessary condition for happiness, but that besides virtue other things are needed. (Given the fact that Aristotle's writings only became available in the first century BCE, the debate is presumably of a later date, though, and was not one the early Stoics already engaged in.)

For Socrates virtue was a form of wisdom or knowledge. Virtue as wisdom is in Xenophon, *Recollections* 3.9.5 (LM D35): "Socrates said that justice and every other virtue is wisdom." Virtue as knowledge is in Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1216b2 (LM D37): "He thought that all the virtues are forms of knowledge [*epistēmas gar ōiet' einai pasas tas arētas*]."

Just like Socrates, the Stoics also understood virtue to be knowledge. In Socratic fashion they defined virtue and the virtues as knowledge. A list of virtues thus defined is best preserved by the 5th century anthologist Stobaeus 2.59.4–15 (*SVF* 3.262, LS 61H):

> Practical wisdom is the science of what should and should not be done and of neutral actions, or the science of things that are good and bad and neutral as applied to a creature whose nature is social. … Moderation is the science of what should be chosen and avoided and of neutral situations. Justice is the science concerned with distributing individual deserts. Courage is the science of things that are fearful and not fearful and neither of these. (tr. LS)

The Stoics understood knowledge in two senses: first, as a product, as a system of cognitions about a specific topic, and, second, as a disposition "that in the reception of impressions cannot be shaken by reason, which they say consists in tension and in power" (Stobaeus 2.73.19–74.3, *SVF* 3.112, LS 41H). The definition of knowledge as the unshakeable disposition, which deals correctly with any sensory impression, is particularly apt for the virtues, and is thus how we find virtue and the virtues also defined, e.g. in Diogenes Laertius' unfortunately mutilated list, at 7.93 (*SVF* 3.76):

> Magnanimity is knowledge or a disposition which makes one superior to those things which happen alike to vicious and virtuous men; self-control is an unsurpassable disposition [concerned with] what accords with right reason or a disposition which cannot be defeated by pleasures; endurance is knowledge of or a disposition [concerned with] what one is to stand firmly by and what one is not to stand firmly by and what is neither; quick-wittedness is a disposition which instantly finds out what the appropriate action is. (tr. Inwood and Gerson)

They also defined virtue in general as a disposition. In his discussion of Stoic ethics, after having discussed the Stoic definitions of the good life, this is how Diogenes Laertius, at 7.89 (*SVF* 3.38, LS 61A), starts the section on virtue: "Virtue is a consistent disposition." It is this disposition, then, that makes the virtuous person always act virtuously.

Socrates and Stoic Ethics: The Interrelatedness of the Virtues

As we have just seen, according to our extant evidence, both Socrates and the Stoics understood the virtues as knowledge. However, this does not imply that they considered the

virtues to be one.[27] As for Socrates, he discusses the virtues as separate and interrelated. Two examples should suffice here. In Xenophon's *Recollections* 4.6.7 Socrates and Euthydemus connect wisdom with justice and piety. They agree that wisdom is not omniscience, but rather knowledge of "what is lawful concerning the gods," which they had defined earlier as piety (2–4), as well as of "what is lawful concerning men," which they had defined as justice (5–7). In Plato's *Gorgias* 507a-b (LM D43) Socrates brings up the connection between the virtues of moderation, justice and piety: "The moderate man will do what is fitting [*prosēkon*] with regard to men and gods; fitting towards men is justice, fitting towards the gods is piety."

As for the Stoics, they also hold on to the doctrine that the virtues are separate: there is no one single virtue, but the virtues are interrelated. An important but hostile account can be found in Plutarch's *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*, at 1034c-e (presented in bits and pieces in von Arnim's *SVF*, at 1.200 [Zeno], 1.373 [Cleanthes], 1.563 [Aristo], and 3.258 [Chrysippus], but in full in LS 61C):

> [i] Zeno admits several different virtues, as Plato does, namely practical wisdom, courage, moderation and justice, on the grounds that although inseparable they are distinct and different from each other. Yet in defining each of them he says that courage is practical wisdom in matters requiring endurance, moderation is practical wisdom in matters requiring choice, practical wisdom in the special sense is wisdom in matters requiring action, and justice is practical wisdom in matters requiring distribution—on the grounds that it is one single virtue, which seems to differ in actions according to its dispositions relative to things.
> [ii] And not only does Zeno seem to contradict himself over this, but so does Chrysippus, who criticizes Aristo because he said that the other virtues were dispositions of a single virtue, yet supports Zeno for defining each of the virtues in this way.
> [iii] And Cleanthes in his *Physical Recollections*, having said that tension is a stroke of fire, and that if it becomes enough for fulfilling what comes in one's path, it is called strength and might, adds the following words: "This strength and might, when it arises in what seem to be matters requiring persistence, is self-control; when in matters requiring endurance, courage; concerning deserts, justice; concerning choices and avoidances, moderation." (tr. LS, modified)

Before discussing what Plutarch tells us about the Stoics, two preliminary remarks need to be made here. First, it should be noted that Plutarch ascribes the doctrine of the differences between the virtues to Plato rather than to Socrates, as had become customary in the first century CE among Platonists (as the Academics are then more fittingly called), who like Plutarch studied Plato's texts for their own sake. Second, the overall aim of Plutarch's treatise is to criticize (or even ridicule) the Stoics for their self-contradictions. With regard to the Stoics, who aimed for the consistency of their doctrines, this appears to be a particularly suitable strategy. However, Plutarch often shows no more than that the Stoics discussed their doctrines from different points of view or that the subsequent heads of the schools developed the doctrines of their predecessors further.

As for what Plutarch tells us about the early Stoics, it is clear that most of them held on to the doctrine that the virtues are not one, but that they are connected. One Stoic, Aristo of Chios, disagreed, maintaining that virtue is indeed one, but then Aristo also deviated in other aspects from the doctrines as they had been developed by Zeno: he considered the study of nature irrelevant, offering a formulation of the good life without reference to nature

(cf. Ioppolo 1980). These deviations may well be understood as the results of a debate with Zeno about how to understand Socrates or more plainly as a struggle for mastery over the Stoic sect. At any rate, Chrysippus, the third head of the school, followed Zeno in considering the virtues interconnected rather than one, criticizing Aristo for deviating from Zeno's position, as stated in section [ii] of the Plutarch passage.[28]

The exact nature of the interconnectedness was an issue, about which the different heads of the schools formulated their own proposals. For Zeno the different virtues are connected in the sense that the virtues are all forms of practical wisdom, applied in different realms—see section [i] of the Plutarch passage. For Cleanthes, as Plutarch tells us in section [iii], the virtues are connected in the sense that they are all strength and might, yet again applied in different realms. Cleanthes' use of "self-control" [*enkrateia*] has surprised commentators, but should presumably be traced back to Socrates himself. In Xenophon, *Recollections* 1.5.4, Socrates declared "self-control" [*enkrateia*] to be the "foundation" [*krēpis*] for virtue; in *Recollections* 4.5.1 he praised self-control above all else (see further Boys-Stones and Rowe 2013: 71–4). Against this background the terms "strength" and "might" or the title of Cleanthes' treatise *Physical Recollections* are perhaps less surprising: against Aristo, Cleanthes might have wanted to bring in physics in the same way Socrates did. Plutarch's strategy thus backfires: rather than that their positions are inconsistent, Zeno and Cleanthes chose a different point of view: whereas Zeno had presented the interconnectedness of the virtues from the point of view of ethics, Cleanthes presented it from the point of view of physics.

Disavowal of Knowledge: Ignorance

Among the best-known Socratic unconventional opinions is the paradox that Socrates claims not to have knowledge. Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is perhaps most famously captured in Plato's *Apology*, at 21d (LM D11a, cf. 29d, LM 11b): "It seemed to me that I was a tiny bit wiser than him [someone claiming to be wise], by this very difference, that what I do not know, I do not think either that I know it." A simpler, more down-to-earth version can be found in Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* 183b7–8 (LM D15): "Socrates asked questions, but did not answer them; for he admitted that he did not know." Socrates thus makes clear that he is not wise, does not have knowledge, and—given that he considers virtue to be knowledge—that he is not virtuous.

The Stoics' disavowal of knowledge appears to be modeled after the example of Socrates, at least the Socrates as they interpreted him. Like Socrates, they denied wisdom, knowledge or virtue for themselves. This denial can only be properly understood if we look at their conception of knowledge. According to the Stoics, as we have seen already in relation the Stoic definitions of virtue, knowledge is the infallible, perfect disposition out of which the person having that disposition always has the perfect grasp of each impression. Zeno's well-reported hand simile (see e.g. Cicero, *Lucullus* 145, *SVF* 1.66, LS 41A) is meant to illustrate this. Zeno compares an impression that is grasped with a hand turned into a fist. An impression that is grasped is not yet knowledge. Such an impression that is grasped only becomes secure knowledge if it is done out of an infallible condition. In the hand simile the other hand goes over the fist and makes it thus secure. Only someone with such a disposition is capable of dealing with impressions securely and has knowledge; all others have not and are declared ignorant. Only sages have knowledge and are good; all other inferior persons are ignorant and bad. Ignorance for the Stoics has thus this unusual broad scope of not having an infallible disposition.

According to the Stoics, sages are very rare indeed and almost nowhere to be found (Brouwer 2014: 92–135). The Stoic doctrine of the rarity of the sage may yet again have been inspired by Socrates. If their venerated Socrates declared himself not to be a sage, who else could be? In denying sagehood for themselves, the Stoics thus included themselves among the ignorant, not having the disposition out of which to deal with each impression in an infallible manner. However, being inferior persons, they did not deny themselves the possibility of having cognitive impressions, on the basis of which they were able to develop their doctrinal ethics etc., just like Socrates had been able to bring his convictions into play.

Even though Socrates explicitly denied sagehood for himself, the Stoics' veneration for Socrates appears to have gone as far as that they took him to be a sage after all, at least in the final phase of his life. In the extant sources (esp. Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.* 1042f-1043a, Plutarch, *Comm. Not.* 1062b, Stobaeus 2.113.12–16; only the last passage is in *SVF*, at 3.540) the Stoics introduced the sage who is not yet aware of the fact that he has achieved sagehood. Even though Socrates is nowhere explicitly identified as such a sage, it seems likely that they developed it having Socrates in mind, esp. as Plato depicted him in the *Crito* and *Phaedo*. In the last days of his life, perhaps without noticing it himself, Socrates may have finally acquired that infallible disposition, calmly accepting his death as part of the divine order of things, in striking contrast to Crito, who—as Plato describes it in the eponymous dialogue—desperately tries to get him out of prison, or to those who could no longer hold back their tears, when he finally drinks the poison, as described by Plato in the *Phaedo*, at 117c-e:

> When we saw him drinking it and after he drank it, we could hold them back no longer; my own tears came in floods against my will. So I covered my face. I was weeping for myself, not for him—for my misfortune in being deprived of such a comrade. Even before me, Crito was unable to restrain his tears and got up. Apollodorus had not ceased from weeping before, and at this moment his noisy tears and anger made everybody present break down, except Socrates. "What is this," he said, "you strange fellows. It is mainly for this reason that I sent the women away, to avoid such unseemliness, for I am told one should die in good omened silence. So keep quiet and keep strong." (tr. Hutchinson, modified)

Conclusion

It is time to round off. The Stoics shared Socrates' interest in ethics—and in physics in so far as it relates to ethics. Like Socrates, they considered virtue to be the most important topic, discussing virtue, like Socrates, in terms of knowledge. Just as for Socrates, for the Stoics the virtues are not one, but interrelated. Like Socrates, they did not consider themselves to be virtuous or have the infallible disposition of knowledge, out of which they could always act perfectly. Their admiration for Socrates may even have gone as far as that the Stoics may have considered Socrates to be virtuous after all, in the last days of his life, calmly accepting his fate, drinking the poison he was ordered to drink, just as Plato had depicted him in the *Crito* and above all the *Phaedo*. They thus developed the thought that Socrates may not have been aware of the fact that he had become virtuous, declaring him a perfect human being, who has not yet become aware of his wisdom. This interpretation of Socrates would have made him even worthier to be followed by the early Stoics and their pupils.

Notes

1 In the older literature (see e.g. Döring 1972) Stilpo and Diodorus are considered as members of the same school; for them as leading different schools see Sedley 1977.
2 For what Zeno might have learned from Polemo, see Sedley 1999.
3 See e.g. Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1117d; cf. Riley 1980; Kleve 1983; Vander Waerdt 1994, 8; Brouwer 2014, 168. For the evidence on the hostility towards Socrates by Epicurus' follower Philodemus of Gadara, see Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992.
4 See e.g. Cicero, *De Or.* 3.67 (Polemo fr. 74 Gigante, Arcesilaus test 5a Mette).
5 On the development towards reading Plato's texts as offering a system of thought see Bonazzi 2015; on the Stoic background to this development see Engberg-Pedersen 2017.
6 For Arcesilaus as a student of Polemo see (yet again) Cicero, *De Or.* 3.67 (Polemo fr. 74 Gigante, Arcesilaus test. 5a Mette). For Zeno and Arcesilaus studying together with Polemo see Cicero, *Varro* 35 (Polemo fr. 76 Gigante, Arcesilaus test. 5b5 Mette, *SVF* 1.13), Strabo 13.1.67 (Polemo fr. 77 Gigante, Arcesilaus test. 1c2 Mette, *SVF* 1.10), Numenius ap. Eusebius, *PE* 14.5.12 (Polemo fr. 90 Gigante, Arcesilaus test. 2 ll. 63–65 Mette, *SVF* 1.11).
7 See LS 16–17 for the evidence and a discussion thereof.
8 In her excellent monograph on Aristo, Ioppolo discusses the passage in relation to Arcesilaus' license only (1980: 30).
9 Cf. in modern scholarship the contrast between the "skeptical" Socrates on the one hand and the "principled" or "visionary" Socrates on the other hand. For principled see Vlastos 1991 and 1994; for visionary see Polito 2015: 10. See further Dillon 2019: 62.
10 *PHerc*. 1020 may contain part of Chrysippus' *Logical Investigations* and could thus be the other exception; for his authorship see Alessandrelli and Ranocchia 2017, 8–17.
11 To be contrasted with the later genre of (textual) *Commentaries*, developed once the texts by Plato (or Aristotle, for that matter) had been given canonical status.
12 Athenaeus 4.162b (fr. 191 Döring, fr. 24 Giannantoni), but see DL 1.16 (fr. 189 Döring), for a denial that Stilpo would have done so.
13 Persaeus may also have made a compilation from Zeno's and Stilpo's *Recollections*, under the title *Convivial Dialogues*, see Athenaeus 4.162b (*SVF* 1.452), cf. Gourinat 2012.
14 For a comparison of their *Apologies* see Denyer 2019: 23.
15 Zeno's eagerness to learn—and the absence of self-conceit that went with it—is nicely illustrated by the anecdote in DL 7.25: even at a stage in which he had already developed his own doctrines, he was still prepared to learn from Polemo the Academic.
16 Cf. Dorion 2011, 18–19 with regard to the reconstruction of Socrates in modern scholarship, who refreshingly maintains that the different accounts are "an exceptional occasion for enriching our understanding of Socratism."
17 For the Stoic reception of Plato's *Apology* see Brouwer 2014: 145–8, for the *Crito* see Sedley 1993: 317, Brouwer 2014: 165, for the *Phaedo* see Sedley 1993: 317, Alesse 2015. See further below section 3.4.
18 On Zeno's city of sages see Plutarch, *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* 329a-b (*SVF* 1.262, LS 67A), cf. Brouwer 2006.
19 For other recent discussions of Stoic ethics in a Socratic context see Alesse 2000: 289–343, Brown 2006.
20 For the Socratic nature of the doctrine see Denyer 2019: 24.
21 For more on the Stoic division of wisdom, see Brouwer 2014: 18–41 and Stephens' chapter in this volume, "The Stoics and their Philosophical System."
22 For a fuller discussion of this extraordinary passage in the Socratic-Stoic context see Long 1988: 163, cf. Dorion 2017, 40–1.
23 For the Socratic paradoxes see e.g. O'Brien 1967, who reconstructs them from Plato's texts only, Gerson 2013: 41; cf. Dillon 2019: 41, who rather speaks of "principles" (which are, of course, no less controversial). For the Stoic paradoxes and Socrates, see Alesse 2001: 121.
24 For a parallel see Cicero, *Lucullus* 136 (*SVF* 3.599).
25 For modern slightly different lists of the Socratic paradoxes see e.g. O'Brien 1967, 16: virtue is knowledge, vice is ignorance, virtue can be taught, no one does wrong willingly, no one wishes evil; Gerson 2013: 41, virtue is knowledge, no one does wrong unwillingly, it is better to suffer than do evil, Socratic ignorance; Dillon 2019: 66, what matters most is virtue, the best possible condition of the soul; virtues are knowledge, it is better to suffer injustice than to inflict it.
26 See e.g. Schriefl 2019: 136 with further references.

27 For helpful, recent discussions of the Stoic conception of virtue see Vogt 2017, Forschner 2018: 197–206.
28 For Chrysippus see further Schofield 1984, Collette-Dučić 2014, Gourinat 2014.

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10

ACADEMIC SKEPTICISM AND THE SOCRATIC METHOD

Svavar Hrafn Svavarsson

Born about three decades after the death of Plato, Arcesilaus became scholarch of the Academy around 268/7 BCE. While his philosophical debt to his immediate predecessors is unclear, with him there began a new chapter in the school's history, a skeptical period, which lasted and evolved for almost two centuries, or until the death of Philo in 84/3 BCE.[1] Arcesilaus was, along with Carneades, who was the school's scholarch around the middle of the second century BCE, the most celebrated Platonist of this skeptical period.[2] It may surprise the modern reader that Platonists could be skeptics and that Plato's works could be deemed skeptical. But such was the case in the third century BCE, indicating that there was considerable freedom of Platonic interpretation, even if at the end of this skeptical period Platonism started to emerge as a doctrinaire philosophy, and it began to be considered an aberration to view Plato as skeptical. But even long after that, Platonists saw fit to argue that Plato should not be viewed as skeptical.[3] The option, then, was taken seriously. When Arcesilaus became scholarch of the Academy, the Stoic school was its clearest rival, having appropriated many aspects of Platonism, not least the figure of Socrates; Arcesilaus may be seen to have attempted to reclaim Socrates for the Academy by stressing features of his philosophy that were far removed from Stoic thought.[4] Neither Arcesilaus nor Carneades left any writings, a fact which may be their most obvious debt to Socrates and perhaps reflects their wish not to be saddled with any doctrines, if they saw themselves—like Socrates—as continually searching for but never quite finding truth.[5] There are at least two features of Socrates' philosophy that influenced Arcesilaus and underlie the skeptical turn. One feature is Socrates' well-known avowal of ignorance, in the light of his repeated failure to find truth. Another feature is the method that Socrates used in his (unsuccessful) search for truth, the so-called Socratic method.

In many of Plato's Socratic dialogues, and in the later *Theaetetus*, Plato has Socrates adopt a method of questioning his interlocutors, for example as to what a particular virtue is, seeking its definition, or even, as in the *Theaetetus*, what knowledge is. After the interlocutor has made his suggestion, Socrates examines it by eliciting answers to further questions. The answers to these further questions are then found to conflict with the original suggestion, or accepted inferences from it, which is then abandoned and perhaps explicitly rejected as false. At least Socrates remains none the wiser, puzzled, eager though as he was to learn. In the *Apology*, he explains to the jurors that, since he was aware of his ignorance, he was surprised to hear that the Delphic oracle had pronounced him the wisest of men. It

was in order to rebut the oracle's claim that he began (or rather continued) his incessant questioning of reputable people who claimed knowledge, only to confirm that the difference between him and them could only be that they mistakenly thought they knew something, while he did not; he was as ignorant as before. Socrates' (fruitless) search for knowledge by this method confirmed his ignorance.[6]

According to Cicero, whose *Academica* is one of our main sources for Academic skepticism, Arcesilaus suggested that Socrates had not gone far enough when he allegedly claimed that he only knew that he knew nothing (*Acad.* 1.44). This charge, such as it is, has little basis in the *Apology* or elsewhere in Plato's works. As suggested above, Socrates did indeed confess his ignorance, in particular about all the important issues, but only by admitting that he was aware of it (21b4–5). Arcesilaus' ignorance, according to Cicero, extends to his own ignorance; he does not even know that he knows nothing. Arcesilaus, then, seems more radical than Socrates, even as he takes his cue from him.

Arcesilaus warmed not only to Socrates' avowal of ignorance, even if he found it wanting, but also to his method, which had confirmed Socrates' ignorance. It is not quite clear what is presumed in Socrates' method, often dubbed the Socratic elenchus, as we see it employed in the works of Plato. Nevertheless, it is reasonably clear that Arcesilaus considered this Socratic practice an important part of Academic philosophy, perhaps the most important and characteristic part. He may have taken this method to be necessary in an honest search for truth, forestalling rash acceptance of claims to knowledge, even if it led to his own admission of ignorance. He seems to have viewed it as negative in that it led to a rejection of the original suggestion without furnishing grounds for a different positive suggestion that should be accepted. Further, the suggestion was supposed to be considered just by examining the assumptions of those who made the suggestion, without any reference to beliefs possibly held by the examiner. In that way it is a dialectical method, or *ad hominem*, relying as it does on the beliefs of those who posit the thesis under scrutiny, while the examiner's views are irrelevant, if indeed he has any views.

Arcesilaus' view of Socrates' method does in fact not seem to be far-fetched. In the early dialogues Socrates sometimes uses a strictly dialectical way of arguing, relying solely on his interlocutors' premises, neither voicing nor making use of views of his own. But he also voices his own views, sometimes eliciting agreement from his interlocutors, which then leads to their being refuted. This is at least not a purely dialectical method. The arguments of the later *Theaetetus* actually seem to conform better to a strictly dialectical method. But Socrates could nevertheless be seen as employing a broadly dialectical method insofar as the views he voices are accepted by his interlocutors. But, again, sometimes he voices views that are not acceptable to his interlocutors; these views—his views on the requirements of virtue and knowledge, Socratic ethics in short—however, may be considered apart from the dialectical investigation itself, not as constituting an integral part of it.[7]

But Arcesilaus went further than Plato had Socrates go, and formalized the method to a degree by interpreting it in a certain way. By examining a thesis in this dialectical manner, he did not take himself to be refuting the thesis in the sense that he would have to reject it as decidedly false. Rather, by scrutinizing the suggestion in this way he established a counterbalance to the thesis, its negation, again only by using premises that the advocate of the thesis in question could not (supposedly) but accept. If he was successful with his argument, it could be shown not that the suggestion was false and should be rejected, but that there were equally strong reasons for accepting the thesis and accepting the counter-thesis. In the light of this equipollence or equal weight of the reasons for and against the original thesis, one should then suspend belief in either thesis. Anything else would supposedly be intellectually dishonest.

There is no mention or use of this procedure in Plato's dialogues, where Socrates neither establishes equipollence through the employment of dialectical arguments nor suggests that one should suspend belief in the light of this equipollence, although he does remain puzzled, in *aporia*. Indeed, one of our sources states that Arcesilaus was "the first to suspend his assertions owing to the contrarieties of arguments" (DL 4.28).[8] This innovation—dialectical argumentation resulting in equipollence and suspension of belief—may even have sparked the charge that he owed as much to Pyrrho and the Dialectician Diodorus as he did to Plato's Socrates (DL 4.33), a charge which nevertheless reveals the close connection between the skepticism of Arcesilaus and Pyrrhonism.

Since Arcesilaus left nothing in writing, we have to rely on reports found in later sources, of which the most important are Cicero, writing around the middle of the first century BCE; Sextus Empiricus, at work late in the second century CE; and the somewhat later Diogenes Laertius. Cicero had in fact studied with Philo, the last of the Academy's heads of the skeptical period, while Sextus continued the work of Aenesidemus, a first-century BCE renegade from Philo's Academy. While Cicero is very sympathetic to the cause of the New Academy, Sextus is rather hostile, although more toward Carneades than Arcesilaus, whose philosophy, Sextus suggests at one place, "is virtually the same as ours" (*PH* 1.232).

Cicero elaborates on Arcesilaus' Socratic method (*DND* 1.11):

> Take for example this philosophical method, of arguing against everything and not offering a clear judgement on anything. This method, originated by Socrates, revived by Arcesilaus, and strengthened by Carneades, has thrived right down to our own age, although I understand that it is now almost bereft of support in Greece itself. I do not think that this is the Academy's fault but rather due to human dullness; for if it is a great matter to understand each and every science singly, how much harder is it to understand them all. But this is necessary for those whose determination it is to argue both against and for all philosophers in order to find the truth.

Here the motive for employing the Socratic method—and ending up without making judgements—is the search for truth. Cicero comments on the method in another work (*De Fin.* 2.2):

> Socrates' own technique was to investigate his interlocutors by questioning them. Once he had elicited their opinions in this way, he would then respond to them if he had any view of his own. This method was abandoned by his successors, but Arcesilaus revived it and laid it down that anyone who wanted to hear him speak should not ask him questions but rather state their own opinion. Only then would he reply. Now Arcesilaus' audiences would defend their position as best they could.[9]

In yet another passage Cicero addresses the same method adopted by Arcesilaus, but also implies, perhaps surprisingly, that Arcesilaus was especially impressed by what he took to be Socrates' considered stance, namely that nothing certain can be apprehended (*De Or.* 3.67):

> First Arcesilaus … seized especially on this from various writings of Plato and the Socratic dialogues: that nothing certain can be apprehended by either the senses or the mind. He is said to have used a remarkably attractive style of speaking in rejecting every judgement of the mind or the senses, and to have started the practice—though this was a highly Socratic practice—of not showing what he himself thought but of arguing against what anyone said they thought.

Socrates was of the opinion that nothing could be apprehended, according to Cicero. Presumably that opinion is the result of his having searched for truth in vain with his method, although there might also be different considerations behind such an opinion.[10] But apparently, Arcesilaus takes this opinion on board. What are we then to make of Arcesilaus' employment of Socrates' method? Does he after all use it in an honest search for truth, a search which yields no answers, which in turn would prompt him to accede to the supposedly Socratic claim that nothing can be known? Or does he start by acknowledging Socrates' opinion that nothing can be known, for whatever reason, and then uses the method to underpin that claim? In short, which comes first, the stance that nothing can be known or his employment of the Socratic method in order to find the truth? Given our testimonies, it is not quite clear what motivates Arcesilaus' use of the method, as we shall see when we consider Cicero's sustained account of Arcesilaus' philosophy.

Cicero offers this account in *Academica* 1.44–46.[11] He first reveals one aspects of Socrates' practice that influenced Arcesilaus, namely, his avowal of ignorance, before elucidating Arcesilaus' method (in this instance without explicitly relating that method to Socrates). The passage is intriguing:

> It wasn't a spirit of intransigence or rivalry (in my view, at any rate) that gave rise to Arcesilaus' disagreement with Zeno, but the obscurity of those matters that had previously led Socrates to his confession of ignorance—as even before him, they had led Democritus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and virtually all the early philosophers to say that nothing could be cognized, apprehended or known, because the senses were limited, our minds weak, and the course of our lives brief, while the truth had been submerged in an abyss (as Democritus said), everything was subject to opinion and custom, no room was left for truth, and consequently everything was shrouded in darkness. Accordingly Arcesilaus used to say that nothing could be known, not even the residual claim Socrates had allowed himself, i.e. the knowledge that he didn't know anything. He thought that everything was hidden so deeply and that nothing could be discerned or understood. For these reasons, he thought that we shouldn't assert or affirm anything, or approve it with assent: we should always curb our rashness and restrain ourselves from any slip. He considered it particularly rash to approve something false or unknown, because nothing was more shameful than for one's assent or approval to outrun knowledge or apprehension. He used to do what was in agreement with this reasoning, so that by arguing against everyone's views he led most of them away from their own: when arguments of equal weight were found for the opposite sides of the same subject, it was easier to withhold assent from either side. They call this the "New Academy," though I think it's old, assuming we count Plato as part of the Old Academy. In his books nothing is affirmed, there are many arguments on either side, everything is under investigation, and nothing is claimed to be certain.

According to Cicero's account, Arcesilaus was moved by the obscurity of the issues that had forced Socrates to avow his ignorance, and before him had led various philosophers to say that knowledge was unattainable.[12] These obscure issues led Arcesilaus to say that nothing could be known and that for this reason one should suspend judgement. He argued in accordance with this view. His procedure was to argue against the various theses and then establish equipollence between them and his refutation. In the light of that equipollence, he urged suspension of judgement. Then Cicero ends by stressing that in Plato's books nothing is said to be certain, thus implying that Arcesilaus' stance is in the spirit of Plato.

The reason Cicero here alludes to Socrates' avowal of ignorance is obscure. Elsewhere in the *Academica* (1.16 and 2.74) Cicero implies that Socrates' admission of ignorance is a consequence of his method, and his method ended in *aporia*. The two views are perhaps compatible; Socrates' *aporia* is a consequence of the obscurity of the issues that he seeks unsuccessfully to clarify with his method.

Cicero, however, also states that in the light of the obscurity of the matters that had made Socrates avow his ignorance, Arcesilaus actually thought that nothing could be known and therefore one should always suspend belief. Now, it might be suggested that Arcesilaus' view that nothing could be known was after all not a lesson derived from establishing equipollence through the employment of his method, but rather a commitment based on other considerations, presumably the Platonic claim that nothing was certain. Further, he would then actually employ his method in order to drive home the claim, to which he would already be committed, that nothing could be known.

If this was Arcesilaus' considered opinion, its reason and status are unclear. It has been suggested that in the passage under discussion Cicero grounds Arcesilaus' suspension of belief not on equipollence, but "on his acceptance of universal inapprehensibility and a theory of rationality."[13] But Cicero does not make such an explicit claim about Arcesilaus; he says that it is the obscurity of the issues under investigation, which had impressed Socrates and a few Presocratics, that forced Arcesilaus to claim that knowledge was unattainable and that one should on that account suspend belief. But, again, Cicero undeniably seems to continue by implying that Arcesilaus tried to establish equipollence because of his conviction that nothing could be known. Notwithstanding that implication, we can also associate Arcesilaus' stance with the avowal of ignorance that Cicero attributes to Socrates. And if we suppose that it was Socrates' method that grounded his avowal of ignorance, we may feel tempted to interpret Cicero as attributing the same line of thought to Arcesilaus, namely, that his stance—that nothing could be known and that one should suspend belief—was a lesson derived from his repeated dialectical toppling of claims made by others, resulting in equipollence and suspension of belief, but not a belief grounded in another commitment. Either way, the passage presents us with a conundrum.[14] Cicero's accounts of Arcesilaus' philosophical practices do not seem wholly consistent.[15]

Although these passages imply that Arcesilaus argued against any claim to knowledge, of whatever kind, Cicero implies at the outset of the passage from the *Academica* quoted above that Zeno the Stoic was a primary target of Arcesilaus' arguments.[16] One is tempted to infer that Arcesilaus used his dialectical method to argue against Zeno's epistemological thesis, then presumably with the result that equipollence was reached, which demanded suspension of belief. We have testimonies for this argument (especially in Cicero's *Academica* 2.67 and 77, and Sextus Empiricus, *M* 7.150–59). This particular argument ends with the claim that the wise person—the Stoics' paradigm—should always suspend belief, contrary to Zeno's contention. Further, it is dressed up as a refutation based on Stoic premises. It is, then, dialectical. The claim seems to be close to the very claim we encountered above, where it is presented as a result, not of a particular anti-Stoic argument, but either of equipollence or a Platonically inspired commitment. The contexts of the two claims, then, are different. Before considering this dialectical argument—offered in the spirit of Socrates' method—a short elucidation of Zeno's thesis, which Arcesilaus addresses, is necessary.

As Cicero explains in *Academica* 1.40–42, just before he introduces Arcesilaus' argument in the passage quoted above, Zeno suggested that one has a belief that something is the case when one assents to the appearance (gr. *phantasia*) that such is the case. While there are different kinds of appearances, one set of them contains apprehensible (gr. *katalēptikē*) appearances. These are supposed to guarantee their own truth; if one assents to

them, one does not have mere belief, but real apprehension. In order eventually to attain knowledge, one should only assent to apprehensible appearances and never hold a belief based on assent to non-apprehensible appearances; the Stoic wise man only assents to apprehensible appearances or else suspends judgment. So, since there are indeed apprehensible appearances, knowledge is possible. An apprehensible appearance, according to Zeno, is "an appearance from what is, stamped, impressed, and molded just as it is" (*Acad.* 2.77) and "of such a kind as could not arise from what is not" (S.E. *M* 7.248).[17] This has reasonably been taken to mean that an appearance is apprehensible

> if [a] it is true, [b] it is caused in the appropriate way for correctly representing the state of affairs that is its object, and [c] its truth is warranted by the inimitable richness and detail of the representation guaranteed by its causal history.[18]

Arcesilaus argued against this thesis, claiming "that there is no appearance from something true such that there could not be one just like it from something false" (*Acad.* 2.77; cf. Sextus Empiricus *M* 7.154). Arcesilaus may have suggested that it is quite possible for us when drunk, dreaming or in some unusual state to have appearances that are false but yet for us indistinguishable from appearances that are true and appropriately caused (*Acad.* 2.47–53, 79–82, 88–90; Sextus Empiricus *M* 7.402–8). He concluded that no appearances were apprehensible in the manner specified by the Stoics. Then, in the absence of apprehensible appearances, on Stoic assumptions, nothing can be known. Further, given the Stoic demand that the wise person should never assent to any appearance except an apprehensible one, this person should not assent at all, but rather suspend all assent.

These two conclusions—that nothing can be known and that one should always suspend belief—contradict the Stoic thesis under scrutiny. Therefore, they seem well suited to being the counterbalance needed to create the equipollence that Arcesilaus apparently sought to establish. But, as mentioned above, they are at the same time very close to the theses that Cicero seems to attribute to Arcesilaus as his own view in *Academica* 1.44–46 (quoted above).

If Arcesilaus accepted the two theses as conclusions to his argument, his acceptance would be foreign to the dialectical method Cicero attributes to him and which he employs, arguing as he does from Stoic assumptions. Further, while accepting equipollence can be seen to lead to suspension of belief in a reasonably straightforward way, claiming that nothing can be known does not by itself lead to the conclusion that one should suspend belief, but only to the claim that one can never be certain that one's belief is true. One would need an additional premise, such as the Stoics offered, to the effect that knowledge is only found through the apprehensible appearance, and that one should only suspend belief in its absence.[19] It is hard to believe that Arcesilaus accepted such a premise and thus agreed with the Stoics on their fundamental thesis. In addition, it would entangle him in difficulties if he claimed to know that nothing can be known—which, according to Cicero, Arcesilaus claimed not to know—and at the same time believed that he should always suspend belief. Perhaps, then, as suggested above, he held the view that nothing could be known as a lesson—not belief in the Stoic sense—derived from consistently being able to create equipollence that demanded suspension of belief, but not known as a conclusion to a specific argument. In that way, Arcesilaus' claim that nothing could be known and that one should suspend belief could also be viewed as reflecting Socrates' avowal of ignorance and *aporia*, but not as expressing his acceptance of this particular anti-Stoic argument.

The Stoics countered Arcesilaus' argument against them by claiming that living requires assent to appearances, and living well requires not only assent but actual knowledge that is

based on assent to apprehensible appearances.[20] Hence life, let alone the good life, in the absence of knowledge and with complete suspension of belief is impossible. Again, Arcesilaus seemingly employed his Socratic method, answering the Stoics with assumptions that he thinks they would have to accept, using Stoic terms. He claimed that on the Stoic account assent is not needed for living, for suffering appearances and natural impulses suffices (Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1122a-f), as, for instance, in the case of animals. Further, he claimed that a good life—and indeed any life—can be lived if one follows the "reasonable," employing a Stoic term of art (*M* 7.158). These answers to the Stoic so-called inactivity charge look like attempts at dialectical rejoinders designed to create equipollence yet again; even if they are not very successful rejoinders, at least as we have them.[21] Cicero does not explicitly confirm this, while Sextus thinks it is indeed a dialectical move (*M* 7.150). Or is the claim supposed to describe the manner in which Arcesilaus actually takes himself to act and argue, as has been suggested?[22] Is this then a description of his own practical criterion—in other words, what, on his own account, enables him to act and argue? In that case, can it also be used to explain in what sense Arcesilaus can claim that nothing can be known and at the same time believe that he should always suspend belief because it seems reasonable to him? The evidence we have, perhaps mostly because of its scantiness, seems to favor the dialectical interpretation, insofar as there is little reason to think that Arcesilaus has abandoned his Socratic legacy.

This is one way of tracing the Socratic method in the philosophy of Arcesilaus. If his arguments are dialectical, he is not committed to them or to their conclusions. He would argue from premises that are (supposedly) supplied by his interlocutors, establish a thesis that contradicted theirs, and thus establish equipollence. His view that knowledge is impossible and that one should suspend judgement on all issues could then be viewed as expressing the result of his invariably attaining equipollence, although it remains a possibility that he is also committed to the view on other Platonic grounds.

It is possible to trace the fortunes of Socrates-inspired dialectical argumentation in a similar way in the philosophy of Carneades, who, like Arcesilaus, left nothing in writing. Consider what may have been his version of the argument against there being apprehensible appearances, which focuses on the condition that such appearances must be distinct. He may have done this in the same dialectical spirit that had characterized Arcesilaus' argument. He suggested that different things, for example eggs, twins, and stamps of seals, can be alike in every respect. Such things could not be told apart because of their very likeness. Therefore, it would be impossible to have an apprehensible appearance of them. The Stoics rejected the idea that any two things could be exactly alike in every respect, insisting on the possibility that they could be told apart, at least by experts. But the Academic insisted that even if the objects were ontologically distinct, they were indiscernibly distinct, again attempting to render apprehensible appearances of them impossible (see *Acad.* 2.54–58, 84–86; *M* 7.402–10).

The possibility, however, that his answer to the Stoics' inactivity charge was not entirely dialectical, but rather espoused by him, is greater than in the case of Arcesilaus. On the one hand his answer seems philosophically more satisfying and persuasive than that of Arcesilaus, and hence easier to regard as an offering that he would embrace as his own. On the other, even if his associates and successors offered different interpretations of his answer, they seem to have positively endorsed it.[23]

The Stoics had answered arguments against there being apprehensible appearances by claiming that refusing assent to appearances as true—and using the apprehensible appearance as the criterion of truth—rendered (at least rational) life unlivable. Carneades' answer was more detailed than that of Arcesilaus, or so our testimonies indicate. He clearly uses Stoic terms and distinctions to make his case, but not without adding his own elaborations

and amplifications.[24] In short, Carneades suggested that rational action and argument were possible without resort to the idea of apprehensible appearances. What would suffice were so-called persuasive appearances, which could do the work that the Stoics expected of apprehensible appearances. Cicero relates as follows (*Acad.* 2.32; cf. 2.98–111): "Their idea is … that there are 'persuasive' or, as it were, 'truth-like' appearances, and this is what they use as their guiding rule both for conducting their lives and investigation and argument." So, even if nothing can be known since there are no apprehensible appearances, one can follow what one finds persuasive. We possess a rather detailed description of how one can consistently and rationally follow persuasive appearances—involving consistency, circumspection and double-checking depending on circumstances and the importance of the issue at hand—without promoting them to apprehensible ones and thus escape assenting to them as true (see *PH* 1.227–30; *M* 7.166–89).[25]

Carneades offered two ways of using the persuasive appearance. On the one hand, he argued that assent, in the Stoic sense, was in fact not necessary for living (*Acad.* 2.99–101, 104). He suggested that the wise man (again referring to the Stoic paradigm), although never assenting to appearances, will be able to act and argue by following or "approving of" the afore-mentioned persuasive appearances (*Acad.* 2.59, 99, 108). Clearly, a distinction is being made between two kinds of reactions to appearances, where accepting them as true is rejected while following them as persuasive—or approving of them—is allowed. The suggested distinction between accepting as true and approving of as persuasive has been much discussed.[26] Clitomachus, Carneades' successor, seems to have defended this position as his own.

On the other hand, Carneades countered the Stoic complaint that assent to appearances was necessary for living, let alone living well, by suggesting that if assent is necessary, and there are no apprehensible appearances, the Stoic wise man would have to assent to non-apprehensible appearances namely persuasive appearances, and thus actually hold mere beliefs in violation of Stoic principles (*Acad.* 2.59, 67–68). This option, actually assenting to appearances and thus violating suspension of belief, but being aware of the possibility that one might be wrong, seems to have been taken up by Metrodorus and Philo, Clitomachus' successor, as representing Carneades' recommendation. Cicero says that "since I trust Clitomachus rather than Philo or Metrodorus, I consider it a position he argued for rather than approved" (*Acad.* 2.78).[27] It is an open question to what extent Carneades himself was committed to either of these interpretations or whether his was a continuation of the dialectical practices that the Academics took themselves to have inherited from Socrates.[28]

Cicero states that Arcesilaus and Carneades did not confine their argumentative practices to Stoic epistemology, arguing as they did "against every proposition" (*De Or.* 3.80). While Arcesilaus "asserted nothing, but only refuted the other schools" (Philodemus, *Index Academicorum* 20.2–4), we do not possess his presumably dialectical arguments aimed at tenets of other schools, apart from those aimed at the epistemology of the Stoics; this might indicate that Arcesilaus' skeptical turn was primarily motivated by his opposition to the Stoics. Sextus says that Carneades, as opposed to Arcesilaus, "positioned himself on the criterion not only against the Stoics but also against everyone before him" (*M* 7.159). Cicero does not credit Arcesilaus with arguing both for and against theses. Indeed, arguing both for and against theses does not particularly reflect Socrates' practice.[29] But that method, which had frequently been employed by Greek thinkers and rhetoricians—first by Protagoras, according to Diogenes (9.51)– can nevertheless be seen as an extension of the Socratic method as applied by Arcesilaus, which was used to establish equipollence between incompatible theses. This may have

been Carneades' practice, although as far as I know there is no clear reference to Carneades, as opposed to Arcesilaus, proffering equipollence. There are several references to the arguments of Carneades, apart from his epistemological debate with the Stoics, concerning logic, theology, and ethics, the last of which came to exert considerable influence.[30] His purpose was to expose problems in the theses he scrutinized and perhaps even offer a corrected version, for his own dialectical purposes, although one might suppose that he would in the end refuse to assent to either thesis. Perhaps his offering of the persuasive appearance, discussed above, is best understood as just this sort of maneuver.

Towards the end of the skeptical Academy the dialectical practices inspired by Socrates—introduced by Arcesilaus and developed by Carneades, arguing dialectically in the search for truth, ending in the equipollence of conflicting theses, which in turn leads to suspension of belief—seem to have all but disappeared.[31] It is with the rise of the Pyrrhonism of Aenesidemus in the first century BCE—culminating in the works of Sextus Empiricus more than two centuries later—that we see a return to it, or a version of it, perhaps somewhat akin to Clitomachus' interpretation of Carneades, even if this philosophy has various other features that it does not share with Academic skepticism.

Notes

1 On Arcesilaus' predecessors, see Dillon 2003; on possible influences, time and place, see Long 2006 and Snyder 2017.
2 For testimonies for Arcesilaus and Carneades, see Wiśniewski 1970, Mette 1984 and 1985, and Vezzoli 2016.
3 On the history of and justification for attributing skepticism to Plato, see in particular Annas 1994 and Shields 1994.
4 On the status of Socrates within Hellenistic philosophy, see Long 1988.
5 It should be borne in mind that the Greek word *skeptikos* (lit. inquirer) was not usually used of Academic skeptics, but rather of the Pyrrhonists; we find it used of both schools in Aulus Gellius 11.5.6 in the late second century CE; cf. Cooper 2004: 83n5. In Hellenistic times the skeptics of the Platonic Academy were just called Academics.
6 For a clear explication of the Socratic method and discussion of the so-called problem of the elenchus, with references, see Benson 2011.
7 For an elucidation of this view, see Annas 1994.
8 Diogenes does not explicitly mention equipollence, as Cicero (*Acad.* 1.45) does, but it is hard to see what else he could have in mind as a means of moving from contrarieties of arguments to suspension of assent. The sixth century CE *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* claims that "they [skeptics] argue that inasmuch as he [Plato] tries to establish contrary views about the same things, he clearly extols inapprehensibility." The translation is from Annas 1994: 327, who explains how far Plato is from doing this (330–2).
9 Translation from Woolf in Annas and Woolf 2001.
10 On the reasons the ancients adduced for believing Plato to be a skeptic, see Annas' (1994: 326–35) discussion of the sixth century CE *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy.*
11 The translation is that of Brittain (2006: 106–7), with a few modifications.
12 In his detailed commentary Brittain (2006: 106n60) suggests that "here [in the passage quoted] his [Socrates'] aporetic method is explained as a consequence of his acceptance of inapprehensibility for theoretical reasons set out by the Presocratics," in contrast with other passages (1.16 and 2.74). Cooper (2004: 86) seems to be of the same opinion, but adds that Cicero's suggestion "is perfectly fantastic" (90). But all Cicero says, as far as I can see, is that the obscurity of the matters investigated is the reason for Socrates' admission of ignorance as it had been the reason for the pronouncements of the Presocratics; he does not say that Socrates' admission of ignorance is based on Presocratic theories.
13 Brittain (2006: 106n61). As he points out such a grounding is in conflict with Cicero's other accounts (2.67 and 2.77) that do seem to place Arcesilaus' claim in a dialectical context; this conflict is a major theme in Cooper (2004).

14 The question of the status of Arcesilaus' view is crucial for the various nuanced interpretations offered of his skepticism. It has been suggested that the view was Arcesilaus' considered opinion, although different explanations have been offered (cf. e.g. Hankinson 1995: 85–6; Schofield 1999: 327–34). Others have stressed the dialectical nature of his Socratic method (as is done here) and that hence Arcesilaus' view is not a philosophical commitment to the unattainability of knowledge (cf. e.g. Couissin 1983: 32–41; Striker 1996a: 99–104; Frede 1987b; Frede 1987c; Cooper 2004). Such interpretations appeal to Arcesilaus' engagement with the Stoics, to which we turn below. Perin has argued that neither interpretation works (2013). For a clear overview of the interpretative options, cf. Brittain 2005. Most of the testimonies may be found with an illuminating commentary in Long and Sedley 1987: 438–49.
15 When explaining what seems to be his own Academic stance in *Academica* 2.7, Cicero says: "To be sure, knowledge is always surrounded with difficulties, and the obscurity of the things themselves and weakness of our judgments is such that one can see why the earliest and most learned philosophers lost confidence in their ability to discover what they desired. Still, they didn't give up, and we won't abandon our enthusiasm for investigation owing to exhaustion. Nor do our arguments have any purpose other than to draw out and 'formulate' the truth or its closest possible approximation by means of arguing on either side." Here, clearly, the Academic method serves the search for truth.
16 Another Stoic, later considered unorthodox, with whom Arcesilaus argued extensively, was Aristo; see Long 2006: 106–8.
17 Diogenes Laertius says (7.46): "Of appearances, one kind is cognitive, the other incognitive. The cognitive, which they [the Stoics] say is the criterion of things, is that which arises from what is and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is. The incognitive is either that which does not arise from what is, or from that which is but not exactly in accordance with what is: one which is not clear and distinct." The translation is that of Long and Sedley 1987: 40C, slightly modified.
18 Brittain (2006: xx). For a discussion of the apprehensible appearance in this skeptical context, cf. Frede 1987a.
19 Cf. Striker 1996a: 96–7.
20 For more on the Stoics' arguments against skeptics concerning action, see Schwab's chapter in this volume, "Skeptical Defenses Against the Inaction Objection."
21 The texts can be found in Long and Sedley 1987: 69A-B. For discussions of the problems with Arcesilaus' argument and its Stoic context, cf. Bett 1989: 62–8; Brittain 2008: section 5.
22 This has been suggested by Schofield 1999: 332–4.
23 Cf. Allen 1994: 88–9.
24 Cf. Striker 1996a: 107n51.
25 This is the main subject of Allen 1994. The Greek word for "persuasive" is *pithanos*, which Cicero translates as *probabilis* ("what should be approved"); hence the stance has been called probabilism.
26 Cf. e.g. Striker 1996a: 110–15; Frede 1987: 201–24; Bett 1990.
27 On Philo's stance, cf. Brittain 2001.
28 For thoughts on that issue, sympathetic to a dialectical interpretation, see Allen 1997: 221–3; Allen 2012.
29 Nevertheless, Diogenes does credit Arcesilaus with arguing for and against, probably mistakenly; see Long 2006: 109–12.
30 For an overview of these arguments, see Long and Sedley 1987: 460–7; Hankinson 1995: 96–105; Thorsrud 2009: 59–71. On his ethical arguments in particular, see Long and Sedley 1987: 401–10; Striker 1996b: 261–70.
31 For an account of this transitional period, and the place of Antiochus of Ascalon, Philo's contemporary, in rejecting skeptical interpretations of Plato, see e.g. Brittain (2006: xxxi–xxxix).

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PART III

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11
STOIC EPISTEMOLOGY

Ian Hensley

Introduction

According to Plutarch, the Stoics endorsed the following analogy:

> Just as in the sea the man an arm's length from the surface is drowning no less than the one who has sunk five hundred fathoms, so even those who are getting close to virtue are no less in a state of vice than those who are far from it.… [T]hose progressing remain foolish and vicious right up to their attainment of virtue.
>
> (*Comm. Not.* 1063a–b/LS 61T)[1]

Compare the student of Stoicism who is working to become a better person with the evil villain who has no interest in improving. We might think that the student is a better person than the villain, but the Stoics deny this. Everyone who is not a virtuous, wise "sage" is equally vicious, miserable, and foolish, just as everyone below the water's surface is drowning. Only the wise person can breathe.

This extends to epistemology as well as ethics. Only wise people have scientific knowledge. They never make a mistake in judgment, and they have no mere opinions. On the other hand, everyone else is ignorant and foolish. They know nothing, and they only have mere opinions. In fact, they are insane, as Stobaeus reports: "They [the Stoics] also say that every inferior man is insane, since he has ignorance of himself and of his concerns, and this is insanity" (*Ecl.* 2.68,18–19/LS 41I). Thus, the Stoics divide people into two main types: the vicious, insane, and ignorant masses who possess no scientific knowledge and the virtuous, sane, and knowledgeable sages.

Although everyone within the ignorant masses are equally vicious and equally ignorant, the Stoics still discriminated among vicious and ignorant people. Just as everyone below the surface is drowning, but some people are closer to the surface than others, so too everyone who is not wise is ignorant and vicious, but some people are making moral and epistemological progress. The villain and the diligent student of Stoicism have relevant differences, and the student can reasonably hope to become a wise person. As Diogenes Laertius reports, "inferior men become good" (7.91/LS 61K). But how? What steps should an ignorant student of Stoicism take to rid themselves of mere opinion and become knowledgeable?

This chapter has two aims. First, I intend to explain the epistemological differences between the wise Stoic sages and the rest of humanity. To that end, I will describe several intellectual faculties that compose the mind, according to the Stoics—focusing specifically on the faculties of *impression* and *assent*. Impression establishes a relationship between a subject and the external world, and assent allows the subject to make judgments on the basis of that relationship. Next, we will define the concepts of *opinion* and *scientific knowledge*, since only the unwise possess opinion, and only the wise possess scientific knowledge. Because of this, one might assume that the wise and unwise share no cognitive states in common and access the world in two fundamentally distinct ways. However, both groups of people experience *cognitive impressions*, which give rise to the state of *cognition*. Thus, unwise students of Stoicism share something in common with the Stoic sage, which provides the means of making epistemic progress. Hence, my analysis of the Stoic cognitive impression will lead us into the chapter's second aim: I will offer a speculative account of how a student of Stoicism should use an understanding of Stoic epistemology to make epistemic progress.

Impression and Assent

According to the Stoics, the human soul, or mind, is a corporeal substance that permeates the body. This is important for them, since they claim that only bodily things can be causes or affected by causes. So, the soul's corporeal nature allows it to be affected by the outside world, and to cause certain events within the body.[2]

The soul is responsible for all the characteristic activities of human beings—reproduction, meaningful speech, sensation, and cognitive abilities. The Stoics compare it to an octopus, having a command center, or "leading part," where the cognitive faculties reside, and tentacles that spread out from that leading part constituting the other human faculties. For example, the sense of sight is the corporeal substance of the soul spreading from the leading part, which is located near the heart, to the eyes.[3]

We will be concerned with several faculties residing in the leading part of the soul—that is, the mind. One of those faculties is *phantasia*, which is often translated as *impression* or *appearance*. Impression establishes a link between a subject and the external world. When an external object interacts with a sense organ, a change occurs in an animal's soul. When this change reveals both itself and its cause, it is an impression. For example, suppose that an observer stands in front of a tree. The tree then interacts with her sense organs in such a way that it causes a change in her soul.[4] As a result of this change, the observer becomes aware of the tree. Furthermore, she becomes aware of the change itself, just as one becomes aware of light by observing an illuminated object. Thus, when a change is caused by an external object's impact on the sense organs, and that change is accompanied by awareness of the external object and the change itself, an impression occurs in the leading part of the soul.[5]

While sense perceptions are paradigmatic examples of impressions, the Stoics also posit non-sensory impressions that are "obtained through thought." (DL 7.50/LS 39B4) Through reasoning, a change can be produced in the soul by the soul itself, which reveals something about the world. Still, even in such cases, the impressions required to formulate those thoughts are furnished by the senses. To see this, consider the Stoics' list of mental abilities by which people come to think of existing things: direct sensory confrontation, similarity, analogy, diminution, transposition, combination, opposition, transition, and "naturally" (DL 7.53/LS 39D). These abilities seem to operate on the already-present contents of one's mind, which are originally provided by sense perception. For example, if I see a bust of Socrates, I will think of Socrates the man through the faculty of analogy. This non-sensory

impression of Socrates reveals (or at least aspires to reveal) the man Socrates. However, to have this impression, I first needed to have the sense impression of the bust of Socrates. Consider another example: suppose I think of the incorporeal void that exists outside of the cosmos. I think of this impression by its opposition to corporeal, bodily substance. So, I first needed to have sense impressions of bodies to have an impression of the void. In these cases, my sensory impressions are the foundations for the non-sensory impressions. We can conduct similar analyses for other non-sensory impressions. Thus, although the Stoics do posit non-sensory impressions, sense impressions play a foundational role in their epistemology in so far as the non-sensory impressions are formed from mental activities on sensory impressions. Given this, the Stoics endorse a kind of empiricism.

The impressions of rational and non-rational animals differ. The key difference seems to be that the content of rational animal's—that is, a human being's—impressions is expressible in language. Hence, when you or I observe a tree, we might have an impression whose content is *this tree is tall*, while the impression of a non-rational animal is not articulable. Thus, the impressions of fully-developed, rational human beings are also called *thoughts*. Thoughts have linguistic content, and so only the rational animal's impressions have meaning, are capable of being true or false, and can be rationally evaluated.[6]

To have an impression or thought is not the same as forming a belief, according to the Stoics. Imagine that you are standing in front of a tree, and the tree causes you to have an impression whose content is *this is an oak tree*. Merely having this thought is not the same as endorsing it and taking it to be true. At this point, we might say that you are only entertaining this thought; it is still up to you whether to affirm its content. Impressions are necessary for forming beliefs about the world, but they themselves are not beliefs.

Suppose you are entertaining the thought that *this is an oak tree*, and you affirm its content. As a result, you form the belief that *this is an oak tree*. Your ability to do this is a function of *assent*, which the Stoics claim is another faculty residing in the leading part of the soul. According to the Stoics, when one assents to an impression that *p*, one forms a belief that *p*. Thus, the faculty of assent provides human beings with the ability to make judgments about the world. However, this faculty also provides human beings with the ability to be selective about the beliefs we form. Consider the thought that *this is an oak tree*. Perhaps you acknowledge some reason to doubt your reliability in classifying trees—either the light is not bright enough to make out the tree clearly, or you do not have much experience distinguishing oaks from similar trees. Because you acknowledge your unreliability, you do not form a belief on the basis of your impression; you withhold your commitment. The Stoics say that your ability to withhold your commitment to this proposition also comes from your faculty of assent. Hence, they maintain that the faculty of assent gives human beings the ability to form beliefs on the basis of their impressions or to stop themselves from forming those beliefs. Assenting to an impression forms a belief, and withholding assent from an impression does not.[7]

Now, more often than not, people do not deliberately and consciously assent to impressions. When someone perceives the world in normal conditions, they will assent to many impressions automatically and form the corresponding beliefs. Even if the faculty of assent makes believing or withholding belief in a proposition within our power, we do not need to consciously and deliberately form every belief. Automatic assents are still up to us, just as much as conscious and deliberate assents, according to the Stoics. Still, at some level, human beings can take a step back from any impression and withhold their assent.

We should also note that certain impressions are called *impulsive* by the Stoics. These impressions are the basis of action. For example, when I see a piece of cake, I might entertain the thought *that piece of cake is good such that pursuing it is the right thing to do*.

If I assent to this impression, I will have an impulse to pursue and eat the cake, which will cause me to act. The Stoics claim that this faculty of impulse, along with the faculty of impression, separates animals from non-animals. Again, in rational animals, impulsive impressions will have linguistic content, and again, the faculty of assent provides them with the power to believe or withhold belief from that content. Thus, whether we assent to impulsive impressions, and thus whether we view certain objects as worth pursuing or actions as the right thing to do, is up to us.[8]

We are interested in determining the epistemological differences between a wise person and the rest of us, according to the Stoics. The differences do not lie in the faculties of impression, assent, or impulse themselves. Just like the ignorant masses, the wise person's soul is affected by impressions, and they can assent and withhold assent from those impressions. Just as the ignorant assent to certain impulsive impressions, and thus act in accordance with those impressions, so too do wise people. So, the difference between wise people and the rest of us does not consist in having different mental faculties. Rather, the difference between these types of people must reside in how these faculties are used.

Scientific Knowledge and Opinion

The wise person does not differ from the unwise person in virtue of their possession of a distinct mental faculty. All people possess the faculties of impression, assent, and impulse, Instead, the wise person differs from the unwise person in virtue of how they use these faculties. To see this, we will investigate the Stoic analysis of scientific knowledge, opinion, and cognition. On these, Sextus Empiricus presents the following account of the Stoics' views:

> The Stoics say that there are three things which are linked together, scientific knowledge, opinion, and cognition. Scientific knowledge is cognition which is secure and firm and unchangeable by reason. Opinion is weak and false assent. Cognition in between these is assent belonging to a cognitive impression … Of these they say that scientific knowledge is found only in the wise, and opinion only in the inferior, but cognition is common to them both.
>
> (*M* 7.151–152/LS 41C1–5)

According to the Stoics, only wise people have scientific knowledge, and only inferior, unwise people have opinion. Scientific knowledge is a type of assent called *cognition*. Opinion is a type of assent. Therefore, both scientific knowledge and opinion are types of assent.

Let us recap what we know about assent. When a human being receives an impression, it is up to him whether to endorse its content. When he does, he assents and forms a belief. When he does not, he withholds his assent and does not form a belief. Therefore, because knowledge and opinion are kinds of assent, they are also kinds of belief.

According to this report, beliefs are formed from assents with two levels of strength: weak and strong. Weak assent is not defined in this report. In another report, weakness is related to being "changeable" (*Ecl.* 2.111,20–21/LS 41G2). This would appropriately contrast with the "strong" assent of scientific knowledge, which is "secure and unchangeable by reason," according to Sextus. Someone with a mere opinion that something is the case is prone to changing their mind. For example, if I have an opinion that *this is an oak tree*, then someone could bring forth an argument, whether it is good or bad, that could cause me to change my mind. Perhaps they could state that trees with the features I am observing are

actually dogwood trees, or perhaps they could raise doubts about my expertise in tree classification. If any such argument would cause me to withdraw my assent and change my mind, then that assent is weak.

On the other hand, someone with scientific knowledge that *this is an oak tree* is secure in their belief; no one could cause them to change their mind. Now, we should note that this is not merely because the person with knowledge is subjectively certain of their belief. Although such a person is certain, there is more to strong assent than this. For we would not claim that a stubborn person's refusal to give up their unjustified belief, because they are subjectively certain of it, is a case of scientific knowledge. Rather, strong assent is an achievement; it entails that there are no rational grounds available that could or should cause someone to change their mind. Of course, very few people will be in such an epistemic position. Hence, very few people are capable of strong assent, and very few people possess scientific knowledge, according to the Stoics.

Thus, weak assents are normal. Most people assent weakly whenever they form a belief. On the other hand, someone assents strongly when, even while behaving in an epistemically responsible manner, there are no available arguments that could cause her to change her mind. Thus, all cases of strong assent are cases of scientific knowledge.

It follows from this that scientific knowledge is true. For one could not assent strongly to a false impression. Hence, Stobaeus says that the "the wise man never makes a false supposition" (*Ecl.* 2.111,18/LS 41G1). It also follows that assents to false impressions are opinions. What about cases in which someone assents weakly to a true impression? Are such assents opinion or some other state? Here, our evidence seems to be split. According to Sextus Empiricus's report above, opinions must be both weak and false. However, other pieces of evidence suggest that a weak assent to a true impression is a form of opinion.[9] The latter interpretation seems to align more with common sense, in which true opinions are possible. For example, imagine that someone predicts that an event will occur, on the basis of limited evidence. He admits that his assent to the impression that the event will occur is weak, for someone could cause him to change his mind if they provided him with more evidence. However, assume that the event will actually occur. So, his prediction and assent are true. This is not an instance of knowledge; it seems to be a case of true opinion. So true opinions seem possible, within the Stoics' conceptual scheme. But, of course, while common sense might state that there are true opinions, there is no guarantee that the Stoics approve of common sense. And no evidence explicitly states that the Stoics posited true opinions. Thus, like good Stoics, we should withhold judgment on the question of whether the Stoics allowed for true opinions.

At this point, we have established one difference between how the wise person and the unwise person use their faculty of assent. Wise people only assent strongly; they never assent weakly. Still, strong assent is an achievement. Because of this, it is not immediately available to everyone. So it is unclear exactly how the student of Stoicism should go about developing the ability to assent strongly. To understand this, we should turn toward analyzing the third epistemic state listed by Sextus: cognition.

Cognition and Cognitive Impressions

Sextus Empiricus tells us that scientific knowledge is a form of *cognition*, and that both the wise and unwise alike have this epistemic state. Like opinion and scientific knowledge, cognition is an assent. However, it is not defined in terms of the relative strength of the assent. Rather, it is defined in terms of the type of impression being assented to: a cognitive impression. Since scientific knowledge is a form of cognition, all instances of

scientific knowledge will be assents to cognitive impressions. According to Stobaeus, at least, any assent to a non-cognitive impression will be opinion (*Ecl*. 2.112,3/LS 41G4). It follows that "the wise man … does not assent at all to anything non-cognitive" (*Ecl*. 2.111,18–19/LS 41G1).

Since the Stoic sage is the epistemological ideal, there must be some combination of features possessed by cognitive impressions that guarantee their positive epistemic status. As a student of Stoicism begins his education, of course, even if he manages to assent to only cognitive impressions, and even if he appears to assent strongly, there will be circumstances that could cause him to change his mind. Thus, his assents will still be too weak to qualify as scientific knowledge. But as he gains experience assenting to only cognitive impressions, he will eventually protect his beliefs against all counterfactual challenges to the point where his assents will become strong. Thus, the key to epistemological progress for the student of Stoicism lies in being able to assent to only, and possibly all, cognitive impressions.

How does a student of Stoicism develop this ability? Clearly, he should develop some understanding of what cognitive impressions are. So that is where we will turn first. Chrysippus, the third leader of the Stoics, included both preconceptions and sense perceptions as types of cognitive impressions.[10] We are familiar with sense perceptions, or sense "impressions" in Stoic terminology. Preconceptions are naturally-developed concepts that arise from sense impressions. So, we should note that cognitive impressions are not intellectual achievements in and of themselves. In normal conditions, all people will experience cognitive impressions. For example, when observing a tree in normal lighting conditions, I will have a cognitive impression with the content *this is a tree*, and I should assent to this impression. Another example: when developing my rational capabilities, I experience many sense impressions of a tree. Eventually, I form a preconception of a tree, which is an impression that *trees are F*. I will experience and assent to this impression naturally, and thus it is not an intellectual achievement either.[11]

Since they are not the achievements of the wise alone, all people experience cognitive impressions. Thus, assenting only to cognitive impressions is something within each of our power. However, people also experience non-cognitive impressions. For example, when dreaming, I might assent to the impression that *this is a tree*. In my dream, my perception of the tree might be vivid. As a result, it might appear to be cognitive from within the dream. Of course, it is not cognitive, since it is not veridical. Or perhaps I see a person at a distance and form an impression that *that person is my friend*. Even if this impression turns out to be true, because of the distance, this impression isn't guaranteed to be true. So, it is non-cognitive. Because human beings regularly experience both cognitive and non-cognitive impressions, we need some means of discriminating between them.

To that end, let us discuss the Stoic definition of the cognitive impression. Note that this is a topic that has generated a great deal of scholarly interest and debate. In discussing this definition, I will present what I see as the most viable interpretations of this definition, but I would note that these are not the only interpretive options available.[12]

Sextus first presents the following analysis: "a cognitive impression, so [the Stoics] say, is one which is true and of such a kind that it could not turn out false" (*M* 7.152/LS 41C4). Clearly, cognitive impressions must be true, since the wise person assents to them. Furthermore, they are guaranteed to be true; they have some combination of features that entail that they could not possibly be false. Later, this analysis gets expanded and this combination of features is specified. What follows is the standard definition of the cognitive impression:

> A cognitive impression is one (1) which arises from what is and (2) is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with that very thing that is, (3) of such a kind as could not arise from what is not.
>
> (*M* 7.248/LS 40E3)

According to this report, there are three necessary conditions that are jointly sufficient for an impression to qualify as cognitive. If an impression meets these conditions, then one ought to assent to it. If an impression does not meet these conditions, then one should not assent to it. What exactly do these conditions entail, and how can a student of Stoicism use them to recognize which of their impressions are worthy of assent?

First, let us examine (1): cognitive impressions arise from what is. This might mean that cognitive impressions only arise from existing things. If someone has an impression that is caused by a "figment" of their imagination, as Chrysippus called it, then their impression will not be cognitive.[13] For example, if someone hears the wind outside, sees a shadow, imagines a non-existent ghost, and then has an impression with the content *a ghost is here*, then their impression will be non-cognitive. For one's impression will be caused by a non-existent figment, and it will not reveal an existing object.

A problem for this "existential" interpretation of (1) is that, according to the Stoics, non-existent objects cannot cause anything.[14] In the example described above, a figment of someone's imagination does not cause him to have an impression that *a ghost is here*. What actually happens, according to Stoic physics, is that some existent object affects the subject's senses, his mind interprets this input, and then the external object and his mind cause him to have an impression with the content *a ghost is here*. Even though this impression misrepresents the external object, it is still necessarily caused by an existing thing. Given these considerations, it might seem like (1) is uninformative. No impressions can arise from non-existent objects, so no impressions will fail to meet (1).

As a result of this problem, we might search for an interpretation of (1) that allows impressions to fail to satisfy this condition. One option is to understand "what is" to mean "what is true": cognitive impressions must arise from a true state of affairs or a state of the world represented by a true proposition. In the example of the impression that *a ghost is here*, this arises from existent objects—the wind, the shadow, a mind. However, it does not arise from what is true. The following propositions are true: *the wind is blowing, this object is causing a shadow.* Yet the causal process that generates the impression does not preserve the truth of these propositions. Thus, this false impression is non-cognitive. According to this understanding, (1) entails that a cognitive impression is caused correctly.

No matter how we interpret (1), this condition entails that the Stoics built an *externalist* requirement into their definition of the cognitive impression. These kinds of impressions must be generated correctly: by an existing object in a way that preserves truth. Thus, students of Stoicism must consider *how* their impressions are formed when determining whether to assent. They should regularly check on their mental state and surroundings. Are they feeling normal? Are they suffering from any psychological or physical changes? Are the external conditions normal? Irregularities in the circumstances in which an impression is formed should require them to withhold their assent.[15]

Let us turn to the second condition: cognitive impressions must be stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is. Sextus provides us with the following example of an impression that fails to meet this condition (*M* 7.249/LS 40E5). Orestes was insane, and he had an impression that was caused by an existing object, Electra. However, the impression had the content *this is a Fury.* Thus, even though the impression was caused by an existent object, it did not accurately portray that existing object. Given Orestes' madness,

his mind interpreted the input from the outside incorrectly. This understanding of (2) should thus be read in conjunction with the earlier, existential understanding of (1): a cognitive impression must be caused by an existing object, and it must represent *that very object* the way it truly is.[16]

Furthermore, (2) doesn't just state that a cognitive impression represents an external object accurately, it represents it *exactly*. So, it is possible that an impression could be generated correctly, while still failing to represent its object exactly as it is. When observing a type of object for the first time, for example, someone might fail to notice features of the object that are essential for grasping what it is. Even though her body and perceptual system is functioning correctly, and her mind is sharp, the subject's lack of experience with objects of that kind cause her to miss out on something. Thus, the second condition demands that cognitive impressions have an appropriate level of detail, which sources sometimes describe as "clarity" and "distinctness."[17]

Again, this condition seems to require that the student of Stoicism attend to his level of experience when evaluating his impressions. When observing trees, is he an expert on classifying oak trees? If so, his impressions that *this is an oak tree* and *this is not an oak tree* are probably cognitive; they will represent the relevant details of the tree with clarity. If he is not experienced in tree classification, then he should doubt his initial impressions about such trees.[18]

However, the linking of this second condition with clarity and distinctness also seems to build an *internalist* requirement into the Stoics' definition of the cognitive impression. As Sextus says, "just as the seals on rings always stamp all their markings precisely on the wax, so those who have cognition of objects should notice all their peculiarities" (*M* 7.251/ LS 40E6). A perceiver should be able to recognize when an impression represents all of the peculiarities of an object. Cognitive impressions will have a level of detail such that someone experiencing the impression should be able to distinguish it from less detailed, non-cognitive impressions. The following discussion will illustrate this.

The third condition requires cognitive impressions to be of such a kind that could not arise from what is not. Compare two impressions. The first is cognitive: it is correctly caused by an existing object and a true state of affairs such that it represents that object and state of affairs with precision and accuracy. Let it have the content *this object is F*. The second impression is false, but it has the same content: *this object is F*. Perhaps, in the latter case, someone experiences this impression in a particularly vivid dream. As stipulated, these two impressions have the same content. So they are indiscernible. But if a cognitive and non-cognitive impression can be indiscernible, then there are no cognitive impressions. At the very least, the Stoic sage will have no means of discerning the impressions worthy of assent from those from which they should withhold assent. So, no impressions would be worthy of strong assent—assent which is unshakeable and secure. Someone could always generate good reasons to doubt one's beliefs.

The Academics raised other counterexamples against the Stoics' definition of the cognitive impression, which focused on the supposed indiscernibility of similar objects.[19] Consider someone having an impression that *this man is Castor*. Standing in front of her is one of a pair of twins, Castor and Polydeuces. So if the man is Castor, her impression will be true, and if the man is Polydeuces, her impression will be false. However, if Polydeuces and Castor are indiscernible, then the impressions of the two men will be indiscernible. But surely a perceptual impression of Castor (or Polydeuces) is a cognitive impression, if experienced under normal conditions, with a normal mindset, when one is familiar with both men. But then a cognitive impression would be indiscernible from a false impression. And if a false impression can be indistinguishable from a true, cognitive impression, then

the Stoics have a major problem. Thus, it appears that the Stoics countered such arguments by adding the third condition. There are some true impressions that are of such a kind that could not arise from a false impression.

At this point, the Academics and the Stoics disagree about whether there are any such impressions. The Academics claim that any putatively cognitive impression is such that it could have been false. In response, the Stoics will dig in their heels: a false impression cannot convey the level of clarity and detail required for an impression to be cognitive. For example, despite the assertion to the contrary, the Stoics will say that Castor and Polydeuces are not indiscernible. If the wise Stoic sage knows the two men, then she should be in a position to distinguish them. If not, then she will not have a *cognitive* impression that *this man is Cator* or *this man is Polydeuces*, and so she should suspend judgment.

According to the Stoics, a cognitive impression is thus true and guaranteed to be true. Because of the causal process that brings it about, and as demonstrated by the clarity and detail present within the impression, it could not possibly be false. Human beings experience cognitive impressions under normal circumstances, when they perceive objects in ideal or normal perceptual conditions. Hence, they are not intellectual achievements. An assent to a cognitive impression is not automatically scientific knowledge, since the unwise assent to cognitive impressions as well. Rather, the epistemic achievement consists in being able to discern cognitive impressions, assent to them, and withhold one's assent from non-cognitive impressions. For in these circumstances, one's assent becomes strong and secure. On the other hand, assenting to non-cognitive impressions raises the possibility that someone could reasonably raise doubts about even one's cognitions. Thus, the key to epistemological progress consists in not only assenting to cognitive impressions, but also withholding assent from non-cognitive impressions. In the following section, I will make some final, speculative remarks about how the wise person is capable of doing this, and how the student of Stoicism should aim to do so.

Epistemological Progress

The wise person is not all-knowing. Her superior epistemic status does not consist in being omniscient. Rather, it consists in being able to react in the epistemically correct way to all of her impressions. She assents with strength and conviction when her impressions are cognitive; otherwise, she does not assent at all.

What can we say about the intellectual characteristics of the wise person, which allow her to be so unshakeable? First, she likely is an expert at attending to how her impressions are formed—both the external circumstances in which the impressions were generated and her own state of mind. She can discriminate between ideal and non-ideal circumstances. Furthermore, she is an expert in the phenomenology of impressions—she can recognize the clarity and detail that are worthy of assent. Counterarguments to her beliefs will not cause her to withdraw her assent, unless they can demonstrate that the circumstances, her mental state, or the phenomenology of her impressions were somehow defective. But since she is an expert in determining these things, there are no such counterarguments available.

Armed with this definition and understanding of cognitive impressions, one means of achieving wisdom is clarified. Every person experiences cognitive impressions regularly; in normal circumstances, perceptual impressions are cognitive. The student of Stoicism should focus on the circumstances surrounding the production of such impressions. What is the state of their sense organs? What is the position of the sense object in relation to the sense organ, with respect to light, media, and other factors that influence perception? What is one's state of mind? In attending to these factors, one will gain experience and eventually

expertise in distinguishing between ideal and non-ideal perceptual circumstances. In ideal circumstances, their impressions are worthy of assent; otherwise, they are not.

A student of Stoicism should also attend to their level of expertise in various subjects. If their impressions include advanced concepts, then they should consider whether they are in a position to judge in accordance with those concepts. Think of someone beginning to learn music who hears an A note. If their impression of the sound states *that's an A note*, then they should consider their level of expertise. If they have reason to doubt their abilities, they should withhold their assent. If not, they should assent.

A student of Stoicism should also investigate the phenomenology of their impressions that are formed in ideal or normal perceptual circumstances. They should notice the clarity and detail present in such impressions, since those impressions will be cognitive. Eventually, they will gain experience recognizing the distinctive marks of cognitive impressions that are lacking from other impressions that are similar, but not similar enough.

Thus, for the Stoics, it appears that one method for swimming to the surface and gaining scientific knowledge is regularly focusing one's awareness on oneself, one's experiences, one's circumstances, and one's own level of expertise in various subjects. Becoming an expert in these factors that produce impressions will lead to one assenting only to cognitive impressions. In turn, this will guard one's belief against challenges. Finally, this will give rise to strong assents and scientific knowledge—one aspect of being the virtuous and wise Stoic sage.

Notes

1 Throughout this chapter, I will adopt the translations of Long and Sedley 1987. In addition to my citations of primary sources, I will also provide references to the locations of these sources in this anthology. These references will be formatted in the following way: "LS 45A" refers to Long and Sedley 1987, Chapter 45, Text A; "LS 39A3–4" refers to Long and Sedley 1987, Chapter 39, Text A, Sections 3 to 4.
2 On the Stoics' claim that only bodies can be causes or affected by causes, see, e.g. Cicero, *Acad.* 1.39/LS 45A. On the Stoics' claim that the soul is corporeal, see, e.g. Nemesius, 78,7–79,2/LS 45C. For more on this topic, see Nawar's chapter in this volume, "The Stoic Theory of the Soul."
3 See Aetius, *Plac*. 4.21.1–4/LS 53H.
4 For an explanation of how this occurs, see DL 7.157/LS 53N.
5 On the nature of impressions, see DL 7.50/LS 39A3; Aetius, *Plac*. 4.12.1–5/LS 39B.
6 See e.g. Sextus Empiricus, *M* 8.70/LS 33C; DL 7.51/LS 39A6.
7 On the faculty of assent, see Cicero, *Acad.* 1.40/LS 40B1; 2.37–38/LS 40O; 2.145/LS 41A; Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.* 1056e–f/LS 41E.
8 On impulses, see, e.g., Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.86, 17–87,6/LS 53Q.
9 Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.112,2–4/LS 41G4.
10 See DL 7.54/LS 40A.
11 On preconceptions, see, e.g. Cicero, *Acad.* 2.30–31/LS 40N
12 On the Stoic definition of the cognitive impression, see, e.g. Annas 1990; Frede 1983; Frede 1999; Long and Sedley 1987; Perin 2005; Nawar 2014; Reed 2002; Sedley 2002; Shogry 2018; Striker 1990; Striker 1996.
13 See Aetius, *Plac*. 4.12.5/LS 39B6. Note, however, that Aetius seems to suggest that mental activities that are not caused by "impressors" and are merely caused by figments are not genuine impressions. However, Sextus Empiricus's discussion in *M* 7.247/LS 40E1 suggests that mental activities of this kind might be actual impressions.
14 See Sedley 2002: 137
15 See similar discussions in Shogry 2018.
16 This is the favored interpretation of Nawar 2014: 7.
17 See, e.g. DL 7.46/LS 40C3.
18 Note that, according to Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics distinguished expert impressions from those of non-experts (7.51/LS 39A7).
19 See, e.g. Sextus Empiricus, *M* 7.410/LS 40H4. For more on this topic, see Aikin's chapter in this volume, "Skeptical Responses to Stoics and Epicureans on the Criterion."

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12
THE STOIC THEORY OF THE SOUL

Tamer Nawar

The Stoics put forward a distinctive theory of the soul whose details are important for understanding not only Stoic psychology and physics, but also Stoic ethics and epistemology. Our evidence concerning Stoic theorizing about the soul presents several difficulties. It is highly fragmentary, consists largely of hostile reports, and Stoic philosophers seem to have differed among themselves on several important issues (which polemical sources may have exaggerated or downplayed in line with their own interests). While this makes it difficult to speak of *the* Stoic theory of the soul, in this piece I aim to clarify some of the central features of Stoic philosophical psychology and philosophy of mind.

Stoic Corporealism, *Pneuma*, and the Soul

The Stoics recognized that there are some things that are incorporeal, such as sayables [*lekta*], void, place, and time (*M* 10.218). However, they maintained that only corporeal things [*sōma, sōmatika*]—i.e. those things that are extended in three dimensions and have resistance [*antitupia*] (DL 7.135; Galen *Qual. Inc.* 19.483, 13–16 = LS 45F)—are causally efficacious and able to act or be acted upon.[1] Items like the soul [*psuchē*] are able to act or be acted upon and so such items must be corporeal (e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 106.4–5; 117.2). Moreover, it is widely agreed that the soul makes things alive through its presence and that death is the separation of body and soul (Stob. 1.38.14–139.4 = LS 55A; cf. Plato *Phaedo* 64c). However, only corporeal things can be separated from or present to each other. Therefore, the Stoics argue, the soul is corporeal.[2]

The Stoics take everything corporeal to be ultimately constituted by the four elements, two of which (fire and air) are active and two of which (earth and water) are passive (e.g. Nemesius *De Natura Hominis* 164.15–18 = LS 47D). Of these elements fire is seemingly the most fundamental and the most active (Stob. 1.129.2–130.13 = LS 47A). *Pneuma* is a fiery or airy corporeal stuff and is often described as a subtle body [*sōma leptomeres*] which acts upon the ordinary macroscopic objects we perceive and is blended through and through with them (Galen *Def. Med.* 19.355K = *SVF* 2.780; Hierocles 4.38–53 = LS 53B). By means of a certain tension (*tonos*) or tensile motion [*tonikē kinēsis*], *pneuma* makes things stable [*monimos*] and substantial [*ousiōdēs*] and grants them their real qualities (Plut. *Comm. Not.* 1085c11–d5 = LS 47G).[3] It seems that *pneuma* is made up of fire and air, or perhaps that just one of these elements may serve as *pneuma* or perform the functions attributed to *pneuma*. [4]

Pneuma thus has a central role in Stoic physics. It permeates and penetrates us. It binds the cosmos and everything in it together. The soul [*psuchē*] is sometimes characterized simply as *pneuma* (e.g. DL 7.157), but it would be more accurate to say that the soul is a particular kind of *pneuma. Pneuma* extends through everything, but it does so with different degrees of tension and different motions.

- "*Hexis*" ("tenor") was the term applied to the *pneuma* that penetrates inanimate items, like stones or metals, and also items like bones or sinews. This *pneuma* is cohesive [*hektikon*] and is responsible for holding these items together, sustaining them and giving them their real qualities (e.g. hardness to stones, whiteness to bones, etc.).
- "*Phusis*" ("physique," "nature") was the term applied to the *pneuma* that penetrates animate items like plants and grants them the ability to grow, be nourished, and reproduce.
- "*Psuchē*" was the term applied to *pneuma* which penetrates animals and gives them impulse [*hormē*], perception [*aisthēsis*], and self-motion.[5]

Rational *psuchē* is unique to rational animals and grants them rational abilities, such as the ability to deliberate and make judgements (Philo *Quod Deus sit Immutabilis* 35–6 = LS 47Q; Origen *Princ.* 3.1.2–3 = LS 53A).

The relevant kind of *pneuma* is in each case a sustaining cause of the body's unity, its life, or rationality (cf. Stob. 1.138.14–139.4 = LS 55A). Two points deserve attention on this score. On the one hand, insofar as plants have only *phusis* and not *psuchē*, the Stoics differ from several other ancients in that they do *not* think that *psuchē* is required for all kinds of vital functions and do *not* ascribe a soul to all living beings. Instead, *psuchē* is required only for certain higher functions, notably those such as impulse, sensation, and several others that we would nowadays more naturally regard as "psychological."

On the other hand, the difference between the *pneuma* responsible for endowing a plant with its functions (i.e. *phusis*) and the *pneuma* responsible for endowing an animal with its functions (i.e. *psuchē*) seems to be one of degree (of complexity of motion and of tension of the relevant *pneuma*) and, in describing the development of embryos, the Stoics offer an account of how *psuchē* can arise from *phusis*:

> If the seed falls into the womb at the right time and is gripped by the receptacle in good health, it no longer stays still as before but is energized and begins its own activities. It draws matter from the pregnant body and fashions the embryo in accordance with inescapable patterns, up to the point when it reaches its goal and makes its product ready to be born.
>
> Yet throughout all this time—I mean the time from conception to birth—it remains *phusis*, i.e. *pneuma*, having changed from seed and moving methodically from beginning to end. In the early stages, the *phusis* is *pneuma* of a rather dense kind and considerably distant from *psuchē*. However, later, when it is close to birth, it becomes finer.… So when it passes outside, it is adequate for the environment, with the result that, having been hardened thereby, it is capable of changing into soul.
>
> For just as the *pneuma* in stones is immediately kindled by a blow, on account of its readiness for this change, so the *phusis* of a ripe embryo, once it is born, does not hesitate to change into *psuchē* on meeting the environment. So whatever issues forth from the womb is at once an animal.
>
> (Hierocles 1.5–28 = LS 53B)

According to Hierocles' report, the Stoics maintain that in the womb a foetus does not have a *psuchē* but merely a *phusis* (and is thereby akin to a plant). When it is born, the foetus becomes an animal and its *phusis* undergoes a change and the relevant *pneuma* becomes *psuchē. Psuchē* is possessed by human and non-human animals alike. However, humans are such that, in late childhood or adolescence, their *psuchē* becomes rational (DL 7.55; cf. Aetius *Plac.* 4.11.1–4 = LS 39E). Hierocles' report makes it seem like *psuchē* is "*phusis*+," i.e. that *psuchē* performs the same functions as *phusis* (e.g. nutrition, growth) as well as some additional ones (e.g. impulse, perception) (cf. Philo *Leg. Alleg.* 2.22–3 = LS 47P). However, other evidence suggests that living beings possess both *psuchē* and *phusis* simultaneously (e.g. Galen *Adv. Iul.* 18.266 = SVF 2.718) and that an individual's *phusis* is responsible for functions like nutrition and growth while the individual's *psuchē* is responsible for "higher" functions, such as impulse and perception. In addition to *psuchē*, a living being might thus have *phusis* running through certain parts of themselves (notably, hair and nails), and *hexis* running through others (Philo *Leg. Alleg.* 2.22–3 = LS 47P). Regardless of precisely how the Stoic views on these matters should be understood, the Stoics' distinctive views merit an important place in the history of philosophical psychology.

Stoic Souls: Parts and Wholes, Mereology and Identity

The Stoic view of the soul [*psuchē*] as a particular kind of *pneuma* raises a number of puzzles concerning: i) the nature of *psuchē* (especially rational *psuchē*) and its parts; ii) the relation between *psuchē* and the body (i.e. the macroscopic object, which we typically speak of as "a human body") and the relation between *psuchē* and the person or agent; iii) diachronic identity and neighboring issues; iv) issues concerning post-mortem existence; and v) the relation between one *psuchē* and another. These are best considered in turn.

Concerning i), our sources often attribute to the Stoics the view that the mature human *psuchē* has eight parts [*merē*]: the five senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste); a reproductive part; a linguistic or phonetic part; and a part which is known as "the reasoning part" [*to logistikon*] or "the intellective part" [*to dianoētikon*], i.e. the intellect [*dianoia*] (e.g. DL 7.110, 157; cf. Calcidius *In Tim.* 2.220–1 = LS 53G). In rational creatures, the reasoning part is the ruling principle [*hēgemonikon*] and Chrysippus was inclined to locate it in the heart (rather than, e.g., in the brain).[6]

Several points deserve attention. First, although the precise nature of these parts (or perhaps powers or faculties) is not entirely clear, these "parts" are taken to be *pneumata* (portions of *pneuma*). Thus, for instance, sight is *pneuma* extending from the ruling principle to the eyes; hearing is *pneuma* extending from the ruling principle to the ears; and the reproductive part is *pneuma* extending from the ruling principle to the genital organs (Aetius *Plac.* 4.21.1–4 = LS 53H; Stob. 1.368.12–20 = LS 53K).

Secondly, the reasoning part is not simply one part among others; instead, it is the *ruling principle* or *commanding faculty* [*hēgemonikon*] of the living being. The ruling principle integrates the information received from the senses (which are described as quasi-messengers, Calcidius *In Tim.* 220 = LS 53G) and—in mature humans—is described as being responsible for appearances [*phantasiai*], perceptions [*aisthēseis*], impulses [*hormai*], assent [*sunkatathesis*] and reason [*logos*] (DL 7.159; Aetius *Plac.* 4.21.1–4).[7] The ruling principle would thereby seem to perform several functions and have several faculties. However, these faculties cannot be distinguished from each other in the same manner as the senses can (e.g. by being allocated different locations, Stob. 1.368.12–20 = LS 53K).[8]

Thirdly, the Stoics take a rational *psuchē* to be rational through and through. Even those faculties in the rational *psuchē* that are possessed by both rational *psuchē* and nonrational

psuchē alike (such as impulse and appearance) are strongly shaped by reason. In contrast to several other ancients, the Stoics are not inclined to see irrationality as the result of the activity of some nonrational part or power of the *psuchē*, but instead simply as the result of the rational *psuchē* not doing its job well.

Concerning ii), Stoic views concerning the relation between the soul and the body are not entirely easy to discern. A living being is sometimes described as a composite [*suntheton*] of two corporeal items: a body and *psuchē* (Hierocles 4.38–40 = LS 53B; cf. *M* 7.234). However, it might be more accurate to say that a living being is a *total blend* [*krasis*] of two corporeal items: a body and *psuchē*. In *total blends*, the items blended "are mutually coextended through and through, with the original substances and their qualities being preserved in such a mixture" (Alex. Aphr. *Mixt.* 216.14–218.6 = LS 48C).

Whatever the precise nature of the body-*psuchē* composite, one may still ask: what precisely is a person? For instance, is Socrates a composite of body and *psuchē*? Or is Socrates perhaps just one of these? These questions have provoked substantial discussion (e.g. Long 1982; Gill 2006; Brennan 2009) but have not been easy to resolve. The evidence from later Stoic philosophers suggests that several later Stoics were inclined to identify a person not as a composite of body and *psuchē*, nor as a peculiarly qualified individual being informed by a soul (on *peculiar qualities* and *peculiarly qualified individuals*, see Nawar 2017), but simply as a rational *psuchē* or as the ruling principle of the rational *psuchē*. [9] Furthermore, some of the evidence about earlier Stoics also points in this direction (e.g. Chrysippus' remarks on the first person pronoun, Galen *Plac.* 2.2.9–11 = LS 34J). Such a reading *might* contribute to explaining certain Stoic ethical views (Sen. *Ep.* 92.27–35; cf. Long 1982; Brennan 2009), but several readers are reluctant to attribute such an account to the Stoics (e.g. Gill 2006). Any detailed consideration of these matters has to take into account Stoic developmental psychology and their views of "appropriation" [*oikeōsis, conciliatio*].[10]

Concerning iii), in response to puzzles raised by the Growing Argument (concerning how a thing might remain identical to itself across time even though it undergoes change), the Stoics sought to give some account of diachronic identity and persistence. They proposed that each living being has a unique so-called "peculiar quality" [*idia poiōtēs*] throughout its existence (cf. Sedley 1982; Nawar 2017). On the Stoic view, qualities—at least in the strict sense of "quality"—are portions of *pneuma* and thus act upon the matter in which they inhere and qualify and shape them in the manner already described. A peculiar quality would thereby seem to be a portion of *pneuma* that makes (e.g.) Socrates the very individual that he is throughout his life. However, insofar as the relevant *pneuma* is susceptible to changes similar to those undergone by the body it pervades, it seems that the worries raised by the Growing Argument recur and that the Stoic attempt to account for diachronic identity by appealing to peculiar qualities is vulnerable to a number of damaging criticisms (cf. Nawar 2017).

Concerning iv), as noted above, the *psuchē* forms a *total blend* [*krasis*] with the body. As such, *psuchē* remains in existence and retains its identity even while being a constituent of the blend. Upon death (i.e. the separation of body and *psuchē*, see above), the human's *psuchē* exits the body and passes into the air and goes from having the same shape as the body with which it was blended to becoming spherical (at least according to Chrysippus, *Scholia in Hom. Iliad* 23.65 = SVF 2.815). In this "disembodied" state, *psuchē* is perishable [*phthartos*] but nonetheless persists after death for at least some time (DL 7.156). More concretely, with regard to what happens to the *psuchē* after death, it was maintained either that:

- each *psuchē* survives until the cosmic conflagration (according to Cleanthes); or that
- only the *psuchē* of sages survives until the cosmic conflagration (according to Chrysippus, who presumably thought that only the *psuchē* of sages was held together by sufficient tension); or that
- each *psuchē* eventually decomposes some time after it is separated from the body and passes into the air.[11]

Whether the post-mortem existence of an individual's *psuchē* amounts to *personal* existence after death depends in large part upon how one construes Stoic views concerning ii).

Finally, concerning v), the Stoics regard the cosmos as a single living being and intelligent animal (e.g. DL 7.142–3; cf. Cic. *DND* 2.37–9).[12] The *pneuma* which runs through the cosmos sustains the many individual things which populate it, makes these many things into a single thing, and is the soul of the cosmos or world (DL 7.138–9, 143).[13] The Stoics were inclined to identify the living cosmos, its immanent soul, or some part thereof (such as the ruling principle of the cosmic soul) as God (e.g. DL 7.137–9, 147; Origen *C. Cels.* 4.14 = LS 46H).[14] Insofar as God is cosmic *pneuma*, God is thus immanent and always acting upon matter, and so the Stoics also identify God (or perhaps God's activity) as intelligent, designing fire and as fate, i.e. the causal chain that is causally responsible for everything (Aetius *Plac.* 1.7.33 = LS 46A; DL 7.135–6).[15] The souls of individual creatures such as Alexander or Bucephalus are parts [*merē*] or fragments [*apospasmata*] of the world-soul and of God (DL 7.143, 156), and just as these parts are perceptive and sentient, so too the whole of which they are parts is perceptive and sentient (e.g. Cic. *DND* 2.22). This fact is important for understanding Stoic views about cosmic *sumpatheia* (*M.* 9.78–80) and cosmopolitanism, and also has other important ethical implications.[16]

Stoic Cognitive Psychology and Moral Psychology

We can now turn to clarifying the nature of certain important psychological processes or states, notably: i) appearances [*phantasiai*]; ii) assent [*sunkatathesis*]; iii) impulses [*hormai*]; and (iv) passions [*pathē*]. These play a central role in Stoic analyses of knowledge, action, and emotion and are best discussed in turn.

Concerning i), an appearance [*phantasia*] was characterized by Chrysippus as an imprinting [*tupōsis*]—or perhaps an alteration [*alloiōsis*] or affection [*pathos*]—in the *psuchē* (DL 7.50; cf. *M* 7.228–241). More concretely:

> An appearance is an affection (*pathos*) occurring in the soul which reveals itself and its cause. Thus, when through sight we observe something white, the affection is what is engendered in the soul through vision; and it is this affection which enables us to say that there is a white object which activates us […] What brings about an appearance is that thing which is appearing. For instance, something white or cold or everything which is able to activate the soul.
>
> (Aetius *Plac.* 4.12 = LS 39B)

Appearances are thus representational psychological states that stand in an appropriate causal relation with certain items. These items are also the objects represented by the appearance. In virtue of being accessible and occurrent, an appearance is a psychological state that reveals itself. In virtue of its representational features, it also reveals its object (i.e. what it is about) and its cause.

Some appearances are formed through perception and others are formed through thought (DL 7.51). However, it seems that in every appearance there is an appropriate causal

connection between the representational psychological state and that of which it is a representation. Thus, for instance, an appearance of a particular cat (e.g. Watson) will both be caused by Watson and will represent Watson. Even if I have an appearance of Watson when I am not currently perceiving him (as, for instance, when I am remembering what a curious cat he is), Watson must, in some sense, be the ultimate cause of the representational psychological state if that psychological state is to be considered an appearance (as opposed to some appearance-like representational state—such as a hallucination—which falls short of instantiating an appropriate causal connection with its object). Precisely how the Stoics aimed to explain representation is not entirely clear, but Chrysippus seems to have argued, against Cleanthes, that while appearances might be imprintings made in the *psuchē*, such imprintings should not be understood as being akin to those made in wax by signet-rings, as they do not represent their objects pictorially (*M* 7.228–32; cf. *PH* 2.70–6).

As reported by Diogenes Laertius:

> some appearances are rational [*logikai*], and others non-rational. Those of rational animals are rational, while those of non-rational animals are non-rational. Rational appearances are thought processes [*noēseis*]; irrational ones are nameless. Also, some appearances are expert and others not: a work of art is viewed in one way by an expert and different by a non-expert.
>
> (DL 7.51 = LS 39A)

In mature humans, appearances are thus thoughts [*noēseis*] and are rational. That is to say, they are a product of the reasoning part and they represent their objects in a certain determinate and articulable fashion and have propositional content.[17] This propositional content is either true or false (Cic. *De Fat.* 20–1; Ps.-Plut. *Fat.* 574f2–3), and, in virtue of having content, it seems that appearances may themselves be regarded as being (derivatively) true or false. Precisely how the content of an appearance is determined is not entirely clear, but it seems to depend in significant part upon features of the agent's *psuchē*, most notably upon the relevant agent's concepts [*ennoiai*]. Thus, for instance, two people might hear the same music, but the content of the appearance formed by an expert who has mastery of the relevant concepts (e.g. Minor Key, Pentatonic Scale, Key Change) will differ from the content of an appearance formed by an inexpert person who lacks mastery of the relevant concepts.[18]

Appearances differ not only in the content they have, but in the *kind of content* they have. Most saliently, some appearances are such that we would regard their content as being straightforwardly descriptive. Thus, for instance, one might have an appearance whose relevant articulable content is something along the lines of "this is Socrates" or "these apples are red" (cf. Nawar 2017: 129–30). However, a *hormetic appearance* [*phantasia hormētikē*] has evaluative or normative content (cf. Inwood 1985). Thus, for instance, one might have an appearance whose relevant articulable content is something like "it is appropriate (e.g. *kathēkon*) to take this apple," "it is beneficial to pick up this cat," etc. The Stoics think that these appearances are distinctively motivating and action-guiding (Stob. 2.88.2–6 = LS 33I).

Concerning ii), while appearances are something that the ruling principle *undergoes* (even though the reasoning part plays an important role in determining the content of appearances), assent [*sunkatathesis*] is something which the ruling principle *does* (e.g. *M* 7.237). Assent is seemingly unique to mature humans. It is intimately connected to our ability to reason and assent is often said to be in our power or up to us (e.g. Cic. *Acad.* 1.40; 2.37–9; *De Fat.* 43). As a result, we have epistemic and doxastic responsibility and

may be held responsible for what we opine or know and—more generally—how we respond to the appearances we receive (cf. Epictetus *Diss.* 1.1.7–12 = LS 62K).[19]

In responding to our appearances, we may give assent or withhold assent (or *perhaps* also dissent). By giving assent, we may arrive at items of knowledge and various other doxastic or semi-doxastic states, such as opinions, impulses, and emotions. For instance, by giving assent to a kataleptic appearance (i.e. an epistemically secure appearance)[20] that *p*, we attain a secure form of cognition that *p: katalēpsis* (knowledge or apprehension) (*M* 7.151; 8.397). By giving assent irresponsibly or to appearances that are not epistemically secure, we attain mere opinion ("*doxa*" in Greek, "*opinio*" in Latin).[21]

Concerning iii), an impulse [*hormē*] is "a movement [*phora*] of the *psuchē* towards something" (Stob. 2.86.17–87.6 = LS 53Q) and it seems that impulse is either identical to or the result of assenting to a hormetic appearance (as was noted above, hormetic appearances have the power to move us towards action, Stob. 2.88.2–6 = LS 33I).[22] It is usually thought that assent to a hormetic appearance is necessary and sufficient for impulse and that impulses are necessary and (typically) sufficient for action (cf. Plut. *Stoic. Rep.* 1057a = LS 53S; Sen. *Ep.* 113.2; Inwood 1985). Thus, for instance, suppose that one experiences a hormetic appearance with the articulable content "it would be beneficial to pick up this cat" and one gives one's assent. In giving one's assent, one has formed an impulse and this impulse would typically result in action: the picking up of the cat. The Stoics thus think that pro-attitudes like desire (a form of impulse) may be viewed as cognitive attitudes in virtue of the truth-aptness of the content of the relevant appearances that are assented to.[23]

Concerning iv), the Stoics characterize a passion [*pathos*] variously as: an excessive impulse [*hormē pleonazousa*]; an irrational movement [*kinēsis*] of the *psuchē* which goes against nature; a judgement or mere opinion [*krisis, hupolēpsis, doxa*]; a fluttering [*ptoia*]; and as a contraction, cowering, tearing, swelling, or expansion of the *psuchē* which supervenes upon or results from judgement.[24] While the degree to which these characterizations are consistent is controversial,[25] these characterizations do seem to capture both the physiological and the cognitive aspects of the relevant phenomena and aptly illustrate how the Stoics are inclined to give physiological-cum-cognitive analyses of psychological states and dispositions (e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.23–36; Galen *Plac.* 4.6.2–3 = LS 65T; cf. Sedley 1993). Thus, for instance, a passion might be partially characterized in physiological terms, e.g. as a contraction of *pneuma* (as in the case of distress or pain, cf. Andronicus *De Passionibus* 1 = LS 65B). Thus construed, we may suppose that passions disturb the tension of the *psuchē* in much the same way that a drug (or some other cause of arrhythmia) might disturb one's heartbeat.

However, a passion should also be characterized cognitively and normatively as being constituted at least in part by a mere opinion that is unjustified or mistaken (Andronicus *De Passionibus* 1 = LS 65B; Stob. 2.88.22–89.3 = LS 65C; DL 7.110). Although passions are in a way rational (e.g. they are the product of the ruling principle, which is rational, and they involve assent to appearances),[26] they are nonetheless irrational and "excessive" in that they don't conform to what is in reality the appropriate or rational thing to do (Galen *Plac.* 4.2.10–18 = LS 65J; cf. Inwood 1985: 155ff; Cooper 1998). That is to say, passions are blameworthy and unjustified emotions based on mistaken evaluative judgements or mere opinions and a perfectly rational agent will not have any passions. (This is not to say that a perfectly rational agent will not have any emotions of feelings whatsoever).[27] Thus, the Stoics claim that passions often result from representing something that is in reality *indifferent* as if it has value or disvalue. For instance, avarice (which is identified as a passion) is or requires a supposition that money (which is in fact indifferent) is good (DL 7.111).[28]

Stoic moral psychology has several noteworthy features and implications. First, in contrast to several other ancient philosophers, the Stoics do not take passions to be the result of

the influence of some non-rational or "other" part of the soul. Second, insofar as assent is involved in passions, the passions are up to us and voluntary (e.g. Epictetus *Ench.* 5 = LS 65U; Sen. *De Ira* 2.3.1–2.4 = LS 65X). Third, it seems that the Stoics leave little room for resisting one's desires because, in having a desire, one has already given one's assent. As Epictetus puts it: "it is impossible to judge that one thing is beneficial and yet to desire something else, or to judge that one thing is appropriate [*kathēkon*] and yet have an impulse towards another" (Epictetus *Diss.* 1.18.2). Given how action follows impulse and some other Stoic views about the soul, it thus seems that the Stoics leave little room for the possibility of weakness of will in the strict sense (cf. Hare 1963). Instead, it seems that apparent cases of weakness of will are to be explained in terms of rapid changes between different impulses (Plut. *Virt. Mor.* 446f–447a = LS 65G).[29]

Given their views of the passions, it is not surprising that the Stoics (or at least some Stoics) had reason to provide an account of so-called *propatheiai* ("pre-passions"), i.e. passion-like psychological states that involve movements of the *psuchē* and certain feelings, but no corresponding assent and no mere opinions or mistaken value judgements. Thus, for instance, one might jump at a loud sound, turn pale at something which seems frightening, or feel something when stabbed even if one does not give one's assent to the relevant appearance or suppose that anything bad is occurring (cf. Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 19.1). Since they do not involve assent, *propatheiai* are involuntary and it seems that even a perfectly rational agent may suffer them. However, the precise details of Stoic views of emotions and passions remain a subject of continuing discussion.[30]

Epilogue

Despite the decline of Stoicism in later antiquity, the influence of Stoic views about the soul seems to have been significant. Thus, for instance, the Stoic account of appropriation [*oikeōsis*] was influential among several philosophical schools,[31] and Stoic accounts of appearances, assent, impulses, and the passions were enormously influential upon many Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophical accounts of action and emotion.[32] However, what is perhaps especially striking is the manner in which even some of the Stoics' most vociferous critics were nonetheless significantly influenced by them. Thus, for instance, while Galen extensively criticized Chrysippus' unitary account of the soul and preferred a Platonic account of the soul as tripartite, his corporealist account of the soul—and especially of the soul's tension [*tonos*]—seems to owe much to the Stoics (Trompeter 2016; cf. Gill 2007; 2010). Equally, while Augustine argued that the soul was incorporeal and extensively criticized Stoic-influenced corporealist accounts of the soul, his discussion of *intentio, spiritus*, and several other psychological notions adapts Stoic views about *pneuma* and its tension. In each case, Augustine is either inclined to find some role for the relevant corporeal items (e.g. *Gn. Litt.* 3.5.7; 7.13.20–19.25) or else to "incorporealize" them (cf. O'Daly 1987). More generally, Augustine's views concerning belief, assent, and knowledge are significantly influenced by Stoic moral and cognitive psychology (cf. Nawar 2015b; 2019), and so too are his views about perception and emotion (cf. Brittain 2002; Byers 2013).

Stoic views of the soul were discussed in a scholarly fashion in the early modern period (notably by the Neostoic Justius Lipsius in his *Physiologia Stoicorum*), but Stoic corporealist views of the soul were difficult to reconcile with Christian teachings, and while some have found similarities between Stoic views and those of early modern philosophers like Spinoza or Cavendish,[33] the relevant similarities often seem superficial. However, with regard to Stoic moral psychology, things are rather different.

Stoics ethical theories have proven attractive to some moderns (cf. Becker 1998) and since at least the Renaissance, Stoic cognitive analyses of the passions (and their therapy) have proven to be of significant interest to a wide variety of readers. The use of Stoic views has even been advocated in recent work on cognitive psychotherapy (e.g. Robertson 2010) and it is perhaps here, in Stoic cognitive and moral psychology, that one may find the enduring legacy of Stoic theorizing about the soul and Stoic philosophical psychology.

Notes

1 E.g. Cic. *Acad.* 1.39; Aetius 1.11.5 = *SVF* 2.340; S.E. *M* 8.263; 9.211.
2 Nemesius *De Natura Hominis* 78.7–79.2 = LS 45C; 81.6–10 = LS 45D; Sen. *Ep.* 106.8–10. Cf. Tert. *De Anima* 5; Epicurus *Ep. Hdt.* 63–7 = LS 14A; Lucr. *DRN* 1.298–304; Annas (1992).
3 Cf. Galen *Caus. Cont.* 1.1–2.4 = LS 55F; Alex. Aphr. *Mixt.* 223.25–36 = LS 47L; Nemesius *De Natura Hominis* 70.6–71.4 = LS 47J.
4 Zeno and Cleanthes may have been inclined to think that heat or fire alone was responsible for endowing things with life and sensation (e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 1.19; *DND* 2.23–30). However, perhaps inspired by certain criticisms (e.g. Cic. *DND* 3.35–7), from Chrysippus onwards the Stoics predominantly took a composite to perform these functions. For an overview of pre-Stoic views about *pneuma*, see Annas (1992: 17–33).
5 Plut. *Stoic. Rep.* 1053f–1054b = LS 47M; DL 7.138–9, 156; Galen *Intr.* 14.726.7–11 = LS 47N; Philo *Leg. Alleg.* 2.22–3 = LS 47P.
6 For discussion of Chrysippus' reasoning on this issue, see Tieleman (1996).
7 For more on these topics, see Hensley's chapter in this volume, "Stoic Epistemology."
8 While a division along the lines described above may have been the "orthodox" Stoic view, there is evidence of lively debates on these issues. Thus, for instance, Panaetius seems to have thought that the reproductive faculty was not a part of *psuchē* but of *phusis* (Nemesius *De Natura Hominis* 212.6–9 = LS 53I) and Posidonius is reported to have maintained that the soul was tripartite and had irrational parts (in the manner put forward by Plato's Socrates in the *Republic*, cf. Galen *Plac.* 4.3.2–5 = LS 65K; 5.5.8–26 = LS 65M). For discussion, see Tieleman (1996; 2003).
9 E.g. M. Aur. *Med.* 2.2; 4.41; Epictetus *Diss.* 1.1.23, 20.17–19; 3.10.14–17. Cf. Cic. *De Fin.* 4.26–8.
10 The Stoics maintain that animals enjoy a continuous kind of inarticulate *aisthēsis* (sensation, perception, awareness) of themselves. Thus, for instance, in Cicero's *De Finibus*, the Stoics are said to hold that every animal seeks things beneficial to itself and avoids things harmful to itself. It does this independently of pleasure and pain and does so because it is attached to itself (*ipsum sibi conciliari*, Cic. *De Fin.* 3.5.16) and loves its own constitution [*statum suum*] (*Fin.* 3.5.16). This requires that it have some awareness of itself and its constitution. Equally, in *Ep.* 121, Seneca thinks that in order to intentionally pursue beneficial things, avoid harmful things, and appropriately do other things, a living creature cannot merely be motivated by pleasure and pain (*Ep.* 121.7–8). Instead, Seneca proposes that a living creature must have: (a) some awareness of its constitution [*constitution*] at that moment in time (i.e. its *hēgemonikon* in relation to the body, *Ep.* 121.5, 9–10, 14–16); (b) some awareness of what is natural or appropriate for itself (Sen. *Ep.* 121.7–8); (c) some awareness of which things are harmful and useful to *itself* (Sen. *Ep.* 121.18–19); and (d) some attachment to itself (*Ep.* 121.16–17, 21, 24). This awareness of oneself seems to go significantly beyond mere proprioception (i.e. an awareness of the position of one's bodily parts) and one might worry that animals would need to be more sophisticated than many Romans to grasp such things (cf. *Ep.* 121.10).
11 Cf. DL 7.156–7; Aetius *Plac.* 4.7.3 = *SVF* 2.810; Cic. *Tusc.* 1.78–80; M. Aur. *Med.* 4.21; Eusebius *PE* 15.20.6 = LS 53W; S.E. *M.* 9.71–4; Ju 2009.
12 While the Stoic cosmos is surrounded by infinite void (on this point the Stoics differ from Aristotle and others, cf. Stob. 1.161.8–26 = LS 49A; Nawar 2015a), there is no void within the Stoic cosmos and no part of the cosmos which does not contain some *pneuma* (Cic. *Acad.* 1.28–9; cf. Galen *Qual. Inc.* 19.464.10–14 = LS 49E).
13 Cf. S.E. *M.* 9.78–80; Alex. Aphr. *Mixt.* 225.1–2 = LS 45H.
14 Cf. Cic. *DND* 2.22–30; DL 7.137; Cic. *Acad.* 1.28–9; Plut. *De Fac.* 928a–d.

15 Insofar as God is the cosmos or permeates the cosmos, the cosmos is thereby divine and the Stoics may be regarded as pantheists. However, insofar as not all the *pneuma* that runs through the cosmos seems to perform higher functions, it does not seem that the Stoics should be regarded as panpsychists.
16 Cf. M. Aur. *Med.* 4.40; DL 7.85–9; Plut. *Stoic. Rep.* 1035c; Stob. 2.75.11–76.8 = LS 63B.
17 Cf. S.E. *M* 7.242–6; 8.70; DL 7.49, 63; Sen. *Ep.* 117.13 = LS 33E.
18 Cf. DL 7.51; Epictetus *Diss.* 3.6.8; Cic. *Acad.* 2.20, 86; Nawar 2014; 2015b; Shogry 2019.
19 Even though assent is in our power, we cannot spontaneously and deliberately decide to give our assent to seeming absurdities or to disbelieve what strikes us as being extremely evident (Epictetus *Diss.* 1.28.2–3). Certain appearances — notably, kataleptic appearances (see below) — *command assent* even if they do not always or inevitably result in assent (S.E. *M* 7.257; Nawar 2014).
20 Appearances differ in the kind of grasp they afford of their objects. The Stoics made the kataleptic appearance [*phantasia katalēptikē*] — an appearance that is accurate, appropriately formed, and meets certain other conditions (DL 7.46, 50; S.E. *M.* 7.248) — central to their epistemology (cf. Frede 1983; Nawar 2014).
21 Plut. *Stoic. Rep.* 1056e–f = LS 41E; cf. Cic. *Acad.* 2.59; S.E. *M* 7.151.
22 Our more informative reports (e.g. Stob. 2.86.17–87.6 = LS 53Q; 2.88.2–6 = LS 33I; Sen. *Ep.* 113.18 = *SVF* 3.169; Cic. *De Fat.* 40–3; *Acad.* 2.24–5; Plut. *Stoic. Rep.* 1057a = LS 53S; cf. Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1122a–f = LS 69A) seem to describe the relation between hormetic appearances, assent, and impulse differently. The three principal options are to suppose that: a) impulse is an assent; b) assent precedes impulse and is the cause of impulse; or c) impulse precedes assent and is the cause of assent. This last option is less popular. For discussion, see Inwood 1985; Stevens 2000.
23 Although one gives one assent to the propositional content of an appearance (and this is capable of being true or false), impulses are said to be directed towards predicates (Stob. 2.88.2–6 = LS 33I).
24 Cf. DL 7.110–111; Stob. 2.88.8–90.6 = LS 65A; Stob. 2.88.22–89.3 = LS 65C; Galen *Plac.* 4.3.2–5= LS 65K.
25 For some contrasting views, see Brennan 1998, 2005; Cooper 1998; Sorabji 2000; Tieleman 2003; Graver 2007.
26 The Stoics seem to think that all impulses can be considered rational in some sense (cf. Plut. *Stoic. Rep.*1037f = LS 53R) and psychological states like desire were seemingly characterized as a form of rational impulse (*logikē hormē*, Stob. 2.86.17–87.6 = LS 53Q).
27 The Stoics gave an account of "good emotions" [*eupatheiai*]. These emotions differ from the *passions* in being praiseworthy and being intimately connected to *knowledge* (as opposed to mere opinion, cf. DL 7.116 = LS 65F).
28 The Stoics think that the more general passions may be characterized as involving opinions with *roughly* the following kinds of content (cf. Andronicus *On Passions* 1 = LS 65B; Galen *Plac.* 4.2.1–6 = LS 65D; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.74–6; 4.14ff; Stob. 2.90.7–91.9 = *SVF* 3.394):
    Distress or pain [*lupē*]: α, which is present, is bad and one should be contracted.
    Pleasure [*hedonē*]: α, which is present, is good and one should be swollen.
    Fear [*phobos*]: α, which is in the future, is bad and should be avoided.
    Appetite or Desire [*epithumia*]: α, which is in the future, is good and should be pursued.
    This is schematic. For discussion, see Inwood 1985; Brennan 1998; Sorabji 2000; Graver 2007.
29 For discussion of Stoic views of *akrasia* qua character trait and vice, see Gourinat 2007.
30 Cf. Graver 1999, 2007; Sorabji 2000.
31 E.g. Antiochus of Ascalon (Cic. *De Fin.* 5.24ff, 41ff), the Middle Academy (e.g. Apuleius *De Dog. Plato.* 2.2), and the Peripatetics (e.g. Alex. Aphr. *Mant.* 17.151.3–153.27; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.13).
32 On emotion, see Sorabji 2000.
33 For Spinoza, see Miller 2015. O'Neill 2001 suggests that Cavendish's views concerning rational and sensitive spirits are highly similar to and were probably influenced by Stoic views about *psuchē* and *pneuma*.

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13

IMPRESSIONS AND TRUTH IN EPICUREAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Andree Hahmann

Epicurean philosophy of perception is well known for two closely related assumptions.[1] First, perception is based on atomic images that are emitted by the perceived object. Second, every perception is said to be true. In what follows I will show how both claims relate to each other and thereby provide an initial outline of Epicurean epistemology (for a more comprehensive discussion, see Asmis 1999). This chapter is divided into three sections, each of which is devoted to a particular question. The first question concerns the exact scope of the claim that all perceptions are true. I argue that perception must be understood in the widest possible sense to include all kinds of mental images. The second question aims at Epicurus' conception of truth. This section explains how the truth of perception is fundamental to Epicurus' epistemology. The third question deals with the problem of how exactly the theory of atomic images relates to the truth of perception. In this section, I will pull together the different threads of my argument by considering alleged cases of sense-deception.

What is True for Epicurus?

In his extant texts, Epicurus does not maintain explicitly that all sense perceptions are true. However, many different sources ascribe this claim to him (for an overview, see Striker 1977: 126–8), most notably the Roman Epicurean Lucretius (*DRN* 4.499; Vogt 2016, for the relationship between Epicurus and Lucretius, see Konstan 2018 and Leone 2012). Moreover, the thesis follows implicitly from Epicurus' short presentation of his doctrine, which is contained in three letters preserved by Diogenes Laërtius (*Ep. Hdt.* 38; 50–2 and *KD*, 24, for the status of the letters, see Mansfeld 1999: 5). Thus, we can take it for granted that Epicurus must have held some version of this claim. It is more problematic, however, to decide the exact scope and meaning of what Epicurus says. In this section, I will consider what Epicurus takes to be true; in the next section, I look at the precise meaning of "true."

The first thing to notice is that two different versions of the claim are preserved: Epicurus is either taken to say that all *aisthēseis* are true or that all *phantasiai* are.[2] The two words are neither synonyms nor easy to translate. *Aisthēsis* can be rendered as perception, the process of perceiving or even the faculty of perception. In what follows I will use perception but take it in the widest possible sense. The concept of *phantasia* is even more

problematic to grasp in ancient philosophy. Similar to perception, it can describe the faculty that produces images or the images themselves. It can also denote a broader genus of mental activities to which also perception belongs (see the Stoic usage below) or refer to any mental image including dreams, hallucinations, and imaginations. Additional problems arise if we consider that in later Hellenistic discussion *phantasia* was identified with sense perception simpliciter. Especially the Stoics, the second major philosophical school in Hellenistic philosophy, claim that sense perception is *phantasia* of a special kind or with particular features. Against this backdrop the wide array of possible translations into English becomes comprehensible: it is often translated either as presentation, representation, or impression. But one can also find appearance, imagination, or mental image. I will render *phantasia* as impression but the other possible translations should be kept in mind.

Apparently, it makes no small difference either to claim that all perceptions are true or to assume that all impressions are true, including not only sense perceptions but also all types of mental images. Consider in this context that the Stoics maintain as well that all sense perceptions are true (*SVF* II 78; Striker 1977: 127; for a general discussion of Stoic epistemology, see Frede 1999). To hold therefore merely that all perceptions are true can hardly be conceived as special, as our sources suggest in the case of Epicurus. However, as has already been indicated above, the decisive difference between the Stoic and Epicurean account lies in the fact that the former sharply distinguish between distinct types of impressions and thus do not grant equal epistemological power to all kinds of impressions. For the Stoics, perceptions are only those impressions that correctly represent the sensory object and which they call *kataleptic* impressions (see Ioppolo 1990). Epicurus, by contrast, does not limit his claim to successful cases of perception, but equally refers to all types of impressions of the soul; these also include hallucinations, dreams, imaginations, and in short, any type of mental image (DL 10.32).

Finally, as our extant sources show, Epicurus in fact employed "impression" [*phantasia*] and related words, such as "appearance" [*phainomenon*], "appear" [*phainetai*], or "mental image" [*phantasma*] to describe the result of the process of perception (Ep. *Hdt*. 40, 46, 47, 50, 54). In this context, Epicurus also relates the appearance [*phainomenon*] to the solid bodies (*steremnia, Ep. Hdt.* 46: "there exist outlines which are similar in shape to solid bodies, only much finer than appearances"[3]) and closely links impressions to the atomic images that cause perception (*Ep. Hdt.* 50). Diogenes Laërtius (10.28) also mentions that Epicurus wrote a book "On impression [*Peri phantasias*]".

To conclude this discussion then, there are strong reasons to use "impression" in order to determine the scope of Epicurus' claim and thus take his contention to refer to all impressions as being true, although it cannot be ruled out that Epicurus originally used a different phrase.[4] Therefore, if in the following we speak about the truth of perception, it should always be understood to refer to "impressions" as including all types of mental images.

How Did Epicurus Conceive of Truth?

Given the previous discussion, it is clear why the Epicurean claim that *all* impressions are true is really an outstanding claim and so why it already provoked ridicule and criticism in antiquity (Cicero *Lucullus* 26, 82; Striker 1977: 128).[5] But before we address the historical context out of which this claim arises, we need to consider more carefully how Epicurus conceives of the word "true" [*alēthēs*]. We must examine how to understand "true" in order to make sense of the contention that even hallucinations or dreams are true. However, although Epicurus frequently employs the adjective "true" and related words in the extant texts, he nowhere furnishes a precise definition of his conception of truth. We therefore

have to rely completely on later sources in our attempt to reconstruct his original conception. For this purpose, our two most important sources are Diogenes Laërtius and Sextus Empiricus (but equally Demetrius Lacon in PHerc. 1012; see Verde 2018: 89–90). It should be kept in mind, however, that in the case of Sextus Empiricus, we are also dealing with a hostile source who uses Epicurean philosophy in order to reach his own skeptical conclusions. But Sextus Empiricus gives us also the most explicit definition of truth in Epicurus. Accordingly, "Epicurus said that all sensibles [*aisthēta*][6] were true and existent—for there was no difference between saying that something is true or existing [*hyparchon*]" (*M* 8.9). Diogenes Laërtius implicitly confirms this definition by explaining why one has to admit that even "*impressions* [Inwood and Gerson translate *phantasia* as appearance here] which madmen have and those in dreams are true, for they cause motion, and what does not exist does not move anything" (10.32). Just like Sextus, Diogenes closely links truth with existence by contrasting it with non-existence.[7] A natural reading of this definition would be to assume that Epicurus understood "true," at least in the context of perception, in some sense of "real" or "existing" (so already Gassendi; more recently Rist 1972 or Long 1971). From a modern perspective, however, this would be a barely comprehensible understanding of "true." Modern philosophers are firmly convinced that truth is linked to judgments that make a propositional statement about facts. Accordingly, a judgment is true if the statement can be verified by the corresponding fact. It does not help that it has been pointed out that the Greek word for "true" can also be translated as "existing" or "real" (Rist 1972: 19–20). Two objections to this peculiar relationship between true and real are regarded as particularly strong. First, this would trivialize Epicurus' claim: to contend that perception is real can hardly be seen as a particularly far-reaching or helpful statement. Second, this interpretation would take Epicurus out of the epistemological debate of his time (Striker 1977; 129–35; 1996a: 35, 40; 1996b: 151; Furley 1993: 91; Taylor 1980). Instead, modern commentators presume that only a propositional understanding of truth would do justice to the historical context, pointing either to the Stoics, who clearly held such a conception of truth, or to Aristotle, who claims that "Truth is saying of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not" (*Metaph.* 1011b26). Now assuming that Epicurus, in contrast to the Stoics, insists on the irrational character of perception (DL 10.31), which is why, at best, one could speak of perceptual judgments only in a secondary or transferred sense, there seems to be an alternative understanding of his claim that draws on the *representational structure* of impressions. If one takes into account that each impression has an object that it represents—which is why impressions are also conceived as imprints in the soul of external objects—it becomes clear that due to this representational function one can also speak of successful or failed representations of the external objects (so, for example, the impression of a bent oar immersed into water that (re-)presents the shape of the oar—as an external object—to the perceiver). And this applies even if the representational character is not understood conceptually or in the form of judgments. Consequently, the impression would be true if it correctly represents its object, whereas it would be false if it incorrectly represents it. Some passages in Sextus Empiricus apparently support this reading (*M* 7.203), which is why many interpreters have embraced it (Everson 1990; Ierodiakonou 2011).

However, this interpretation also raises some worries. As Katja Vogt has pointed out, "true" is made a success term in this way, which seems to imply, however, that perception could also be without success and consequently erroneous.[8] But this consequence is definitely and unanimously excluded by all our sources. Let us therefore take a fresh look at the traditional interpretation of Epicurus' claim, according to which "true" should be understood in some sense of existing, and see if there's perhaps more to it than is commonly supposed.

The first thing to notice is that the claim that all impressions are true is ambiguous (Taylor 1980: 114). Accordingly, Sextus' claim does not simply refer to the state of perception but to "sensibles" (*aisthēta, M* 8.9). Consequently, to contend that perception is true does not necessarily mean merely that one *really* perceives but also refers to the reality of the object that is perceived. However, this thesis would not be as trivial as suggested above, although it is still open how to conceive of the precise relationship between the object and the impression. As we have seen in the previous section, Epicurus' claim of the truth of all perceptions refers primarily to impressions. Assuming that we do not want to understand truth in terms of the representational correspondence between impression and represented object, there must be a different understanding relevant to the identification of truth with existence of the thing perceived.

Let us take a closer look at the historical context that is said to be incompatible with the traditional interpretation of Epicurus. Strikingly, a propositional understanding of truth, as it prevails in contemporary philosophy, was anything but dominant among Epicurus' immediate predecessors and contemporaries. Immediately before Sextus Empiricus refers to Epicurus' determination of truth, he cites other thinkers who also associate truth directly with objects, both objects of perception and objects of thought (*M* 8.2–8). Important for Epicurus is above all Democritus, whom Sextus deals with extensively. But for Democritus' contemporary Plato, too, not only judgments but also things can be true or truer (*Rep.* 515d). And even in Aristotle, it is anything but certain to assume that he advocated exclusively a propositional understanding of truth. Instead, Aristotle appears to have held distinct accounts of truth. Aside from the above-quoted definition, he also contends that both "judgments and things can be true" (*Int.* 19a33; see Graeser 1975: 25). Even more importantly, similar to Epicurus he repeatedly emphasizes that all perceptions are true (*De An.* 428b18–19; 439b30; *De Sensu*, 442b8–10; *Metaph.* 1010b2–26). However, in contrast to Epicurus, Aristotle confines his claim to a certain class of perceptual objects. We will come back to this in the next section.

Is there anything more we can draw from the etymology of "true" besides the mere reference to reality or existence? We know from etymological research that to conceive of "true" as "existing" was the *dominant* understanding in the older Greek literature. But one can also find the idea that truth is a form of evidence. Accordingly, the true object is not only existing but reveals itself completely or evidently in the impression, i.e., it does not hide anything from itself (Heitsch 1962; Luther 1966: 31; Snell 1975). However, given that the impression results from the imprint of this object it becomes understandable why Epicurus is said to have "called the impression itself evidence" (*enargeian kalei, M* 203) or why Plutarch reports that for Epicurus "all impressions are trustworthy with respect to themselves" (*axiopiston hyper heautēs, Adv. Col.* 1121d).

Because this may sound strange to modern readers, I would like to illustrate this understanding of truth as evidence with an already familiar example. Accordingly, the truth of the impression of a bent oar in water is not based on the fact that the represented object is actually broken. In fact, the oar is straight and not bent. According to this understanding, to say that the impression of the bent oar is true means that it evidently presents the existing sensible object and thus testifies to how the object presents itself. This is also the reason why one can take the impression as an absolutely reliable witness since it reveals the world to the perceiver by its very nature. In other words, the impression is not true under certain limited conditions (namely, only when it corresponds to the facts) but is itself the first criterion of truth for Epicurus. Therefore, when Sextus Empiricus reports that the Epicureans call the impression itself "evidence" [*enargeia*] and refer to it as the criterion of truth in this respect, he points precisely to this revealing character of the impression (*M* 7.203). But

whether the appearance agrees with what is revealed by other senses or even the same sense under different conditions would be a further question that the impression cannot answer by itself. This requires, as we will see in the following, a further methodical procedure, which in turn presupposes a different conception of truth. But, as we shall see in more detail below, it is only because the impression does not deceive us, but clearly presents itself and is thus always true, that it can be regarded a reliable witness to determine the truth *or* falsehood of our opinions.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this observation. First, Epicurus does not, as is often assumed (Everson 1990: 167), operate with only *one* conception of truth, but employs *at least* two different conceptions (in Hahmann 2015 I argue that there are actually three distinct conceptions). Second, it would follow that the propositional understanding of truth in some sense turns the etymological development of "truth" upside down because it confines truth to judgments, so that the truth of perception is based on the truth of judgments about perceived facts. Against this backdrop consider, however, the following quote from Lucretius, who by contrast emphasizes that "the conception of truth was originally created by the senses" (*DRN* 4.478). Similarly, Diogenes Laërtius (10.32) reminds us that the senses cannot be refuted by reasoning: "for all reasoning depends on the sense-perceptions."

We are now in the position to address the second definition of truth that is also cited by Sextus Empiricus and which is fundamentally different from the first one quoted above. Epicurus actually distinguishes between truth and falsehood, this time understood as a true or false opinion. After all, there cannot be error in perception on the Epicurean view, but only in the opinions about what is perceived (*Ep. Hdt. 50*: "Falsehood and error *always* resides in the added opinion"):[9]

> "Therefore, according to Epicurus, some opinions are true and some are false; those which are testified for and those which are not testified against by (perceptual-) *evidence* [*enargeias*] are true, while those which are testified against and those which are not testified for by (perceptual-*) evidence* [*enargeias*] are false.
> (*M* 7.211–212)

It has been pointed out that Epicurus distinguishes between two distinct types of opinions (Asmis 1999: 285–90). Accordingly, the first type refers to what is in principle perceivable although it need not be perceived at the moment. These opinions could therefore be testified for by the senses or not be testified for. On the other hand, there are also opinions referring to what is in principle not perceivable. In these cases, opinions can only be verified indirectly if the evidence does not testify against it, and falsified, accordingly, if the *perceptual evidence* testifies against them. Sextus Empiricus cites as an example for the first class the opinion that Plato is approaching from afar. The opinion that this is Plato who is approaching would thus be confirmed by *evidence* as soon as the distance is eliminated (*M* 7.212–13). As an example of the second class of opinions, Sextus points to the opinion that void exists. The opinion is true if it is not testified against by the *evidence*. The evidence would testify against the existence of void, however, if there was no motion. But since a moving body requires space to pass through one has to presuppose the existence of void if there is motion. Consequently, the reality of motion does not testify against the existence of void (*M* 7.213).

It is impossible to go into the details of the complex Epicurean methodology at this point (for a more comprehensive discussion, see Asmis 1999). For our purposes, two things are particularly noteworthy. First of all, it should be kept in mind that the opinion is confirmed by what is *evident*. Sextus Empiricus thus implicitly refers to the impression, which, as we

have seen above, due to its very nature reveals the existing object truthfully or clearly as it presents itself to the perceiver. Consequently, the opinion is true precisely when it is confirmed or testified for [*epimartyroumenai*] by the impression, and if it is not the case that it is not testified for [*ouk epimartyroumenai*].

Note that this determination of truth could be understood in terms of a conventional propositional understanding of truth, according to which a judgment is true if it correctly reproduced the facts. However, it should also be noted that this does not apply to those cases in which we are dealing with opinions about what cannot be perceived in principle. It emerges instead that Epicurus seems to take a more coherence-based approach in these cases. Accordingly, the truth of the opinion needs to be proven by compatibility with other evidence and presupposed principles (see especially *Ep. Pyth.* 87–88). However, if we look more closely, it becomes clear that this coherence-based approach is in certain respects also decisive for opinions about observable fact. Consider such cases in which the evidence of perception seems to contradict each other. In these cases, an opinion cannot be confirmed exclusively by reference to the evidence provided by only one sense. Take the example of the oar immersed into water. The oar appears straight to the sense of touch but curved for sight. In the next section, I discuss Epicurus' strategy in dealing with these presumed cases of sense-deception. Before that, however, it will be necessary to consider more closely Epicurus' atomistic foundation of perception.

What Role Does Atomism Play in Perception?

The basic idea is as follows: Since all perceptible objects are composed of a conglomerate of atoms, which themselves are in constant motion, Epicurus claims that "it is not impossible" (*Ep. Hdt.* 46) that very thin layers of atoms, which reproduce the exact nature of the objects, continuously detach themselves from the surface of the objects.[10] These atomic images stream in a continuous flow, at a tremendous speed, from the object to the perceiver, who takes them in through the respective openings of the sensory organs according to their fineness (*Ep. Hdt.* 46–50; for the differences between the distinct senses, see Lee 1978). It is in the sensory organ that the impression is then generated, which in turn is an exact reproduction of the atomic images (*Ep. Hdt.* 50).[11] It is important to notice, however, that these atomic images due to their detachment from the object of perception itself are not merely exact representations of the latter but they are in fact, at least in a certain sense, still part of the object or identical with the former surface of the object (*Ep. Hdt.* 50: "this *is* the shape of the solid object"). After all, it *is* precisely the surface of the object that is received by the sensory organ and produces the impression. Once more, what is seen, for example, in visual perception is nothing else than the color produced by the surface layer of the external object because the material shape or surface layer actually left the object and intruded into the perceiver. There is strictly speaking no difference between the material condition of the object and the affection of the perceiver since it is part of the object itself that has been absorbed by the perceiver. From this it follows, of course, that it is by no means a trivial statement for Epicurus to ascertain the existence of the sensible object. In other words: if the assertion that perception is true is understood in such a way that one actually perceives, it also implies that there really is an existent sensible object with which one stands in immediate contact through the act of perception: given that one perceives a certain color, this presupposes that one has absorbed the outer layers producing the color of the very same object. Indeed, this is a decisive difference from modern positions in philosophy of perception. However, there is also a remarkable similarity to Aristotle (for similarities and differences between Epicurus and Aristotle, see Lee 1978: 44–6; Hahmann 2017).

Strikingly, for Aristotle, the perceiver also receives the form of the sensible qualities in the act of perception and in some way even becomes identical with these qualities (*De An.* 425b-426a). The decisive difference appears to be that, for Aristotle, a form without the corresponding matter seals itself into the soul in the act of perception (*De An.* 424a17–24), whereas Epicurus assumes that the forms themselves are material or atomic images. We have already indicated above that there are further similarities: Aristotle also claims that perception is always true. How exactly this is to be understood in Aristotle is, of course, the subject of intense debate and cannot be further discussed at this point (Hahmann 2014). Consider, however, that Aristotle limits his claim to what he calls the proper objects of perception. By this, he understands that which can only be discriminated from one sense at a time and consequently does not fall within the scope of discrimination of the other senses. An example would be color, which can only be discriminated by sight, or sound, which can only be discriminated by hearing.

Against this backdrop it is striking that Lucretius offers a powerful argument for the authority of perception, which is, at least at first glance, again in line with Aristotle's argumentation:

> Will the ears be able to criticize the eyes, or the eyes the touch? Furthermore, will the taste organs of the mouth quarrel with the touch, or will the nose confute it, or the eyes disprove it? In my view, this is not so. For each sense has been allotted to its own separate jurisdiction, its own distinct power. And so it is necessary that we separately perceive what is soft and cold or hot and separately perceive the various colors and see the features which accompany color. Similarly the mouth's taste is separate, and odors come to be separately, and sounds too are separate. And so it is necessary that one set of senses not be able to refute another. Nor, moreover, will they be able to criticize themselves, since they will at all times have to command equal confidence. Hence whatever impression the senses get at any time is true.
>
> (*DRN* 4.486–499; see also *PHerc.,* 19/698 = LS 16c and DL 10.32)

Lucretius thus emphasizes, like Aristotle, that the individual senses do not have the power to intervene in the sphere of discrimination of the other senses. Consequently, we are dealing with distinct faculties dedicated to entirely distinct sense qualities. I want to draw attention to two features of this peculiar account. First, Lucretius emphasizes that as a consequence the individual senses cannot correct each other. Assuming that they are each dealing with fundamentally different qualities, how should they be able to criticize or even refute one another regarding these qualities? Each individual sense is thus the only trustworthy witness in view of its own sphere of discrimination, and its testimony cannot, for this reason, be called into question by the other senses. In other words, from the strict separation of the spheres of perceptual discrimination also seems to follow that we have to take the individual perceptions to evidently present themselves and thus be true—if one does not wish to cast doubt on all perception. This strategy of justification, which is regarded as purely epistemological, has been pursued further in secondary literature (Sedley 1989).

More important for our discussion, however, is the second feature, which is at the same time a crucial difference from Aristotle. For Aristotle, there is a common sphere of discrimination. He assumes, for example, that shape can be discriminated both by sight and touch. It is therefore in principle possible that a perceptual conflict arises between the individual senses in so far as they extend to supposedly common sensibles. A well-known example would be the above-mentioned oar being immersed in water and which is bent for sight and straight for touch.

How then does Epicurus deal with these examples, which seem to pose an obvious problem for perception and thus cast doubt on its reliability? If we take seriously the sharp separation between the individual senses-perceptions as well as the fact that all impressions are true or evident, the following scenario arises: As said, both the impression of a straight oar conveyed by the sense of touch and the impression of a curved one conveyed by the sense of sight are at the same time evident [*enargēs*] and thus true. The supposed conflict between the impressions arises only through the opinion that combines both perceptions without further qualifications and holds that the oar sensed by sight is identical with the touched oar. This is now exactly the place where the atomistic account of perception becomes highly relevant: on account of the atomic theory of images, Epicurus can explain how both the sense of touch and the sense of sight refer to the same external body although they report different qualities. Recall that the impressions are the result of an influx of atomic images that although reaching back to the solid bodies [*steremnia*] are at the same time susceptible to possible modifications that they may suffer due to the natural conditions of perception. But this is not a mistake of the senses. Consequently, one should not blame the contradictions, which result from wrongly predicating the perceptual evidence, on the activity of perception. Instead, the supposed contradiction should be used as a *starting point* for the activity of understanding or reasoning [*logismos*]. There are two tasks that understanding needs to perform now. First, starting from the obvious contradiction, it will focus on the cause of the contradiction and therefore inspect the natural conditions of perception more closely. Second, it has to organize the evidence into a *coherent order*. In other words, contradictory opinions must be revised or ordered not only in accordance with the evidence of the appearances but also according to rules of understanding but primarily the principle of non-contradiction. On the basis of another example of supposed sense-deception, Lucretius makes clear how exactly one has to conceive of this in detail:

> When we see from far off the square towers of a city, the reason why they often seem round is that any corner is seen as blunted from a distance, or rather is not seen at all, its impact fading away and failing to complete the passage to our eyes, because during the images' travel through a large expanse of air the corner is forced to become blunt by the air's repeated buffetings. Thus, when all the corners simultaneously escape our sensation, it becomes as if the stone structures are being smoothed on a lathe. They are not, however, like things genuinely round seen close-to, but seem to resemble them a little in a shadowy sort of way.
>
> (*DRN* 4.353–63 = LS 16G, translation by A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley)

In his explanation of the same observation, Sextus Empiricus adds that:

> I would not say that the vision is deceived just because from a great distance it sees the tower as small and round but from near-to as larger and square. Rather I would say that it reveals the truth. Because when the sense-object appears to it small and of that shape it really is small and of that shape, the edges of the images getting eroded as a result of their travel through the air. And when it appears big and of another shape instead, it likewise is big and of another shape instead. But the two are already different from each other: for it is left for distorted opinion to suppose that the object of impression seen from near and the one seen from far off are one and the same. The peculiar function of sensation is to apprehend only that which is present to it and moves it, such as color, not to make the distinction that the object here is a different one from the object there.
>
> (*M* 7.208–10 = LS 16E, translation by A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley)

Both Lucretius and Sextus Empiricus thus make clear that the evidence of perception is not abandoned at any time. The approach that the Epicureans adopt instead is to take seriously that the impressions conveyed by the distinct senses only present a limited scope of reality and thus need reasoning to advance to a coherent experience. Strikingly, only reasoning can produce agreement between the individual impressions, and it can provide a coherent and uniform explanation because only the intellect can recognize that what is perceived here is different from what is there (similarly, Aristotle, *De An.* 418a11–16).

If somebody wants to draw the conclusion from this, however, that our sense-perceptions do not give us any access at all to their objects, one clearly throws the baby out with the bath water. For even if one must admit that Epicurus' realism in perception is not quite as naive as often assumed and that he does not easily identify the impression of the object with the solid bodies [*steremnia*] from which they emerged, this does not mean that the truth or reality of perception would not allow important inferences regarding the existence and nature of these bodies. However, these inferences are not drawn by perception but by reasoning that aims at coherence. But whichever way you want to look at it, this coherence is still based in a fundamental sense on the evidence of perception and must always be measured against it (*Ep. Pyth.* 86: "For we should not do physics by following groundless postulates and stipulations, but in the manner called for by the appearances").

Conclusion

To sum up the major results of this discussion: in order to determine the exact scope and meaning of Epicurus' claim that all perceptions are true, I first argued that this contention refers to all kinds of impressions, including not only sense perceptions but also hallucinations, dreams and any type of mental image. This made us consider more closely how to conceive of the true to make sense of the claim that even dreams or hallucinations could be true. I pointed out that Epicurus employed at least two distinct conceptions of truth. The first conception implies both existence and evidence. Accordingly, the impression evidently exhibits the sensible qualities of an existing object. The evidence thus provided by the impression serves as the foundation of the truth of opinions about the physical world. In the third section of the paper, I demonstrated that Epicurus' conception of true opinion also entails coherence-theoretical implications which emerged from Epicurus' treatment of alleged cases of sense-deception. As a result, it should have become clear why all perceptions are true and how this view is linked to the atomistic foundations of Epicurean philosophy.

Notes

1 For insightful written comments and suggestions, I thank Jan Maximilian Robitzsch, Francesco Verde and Katja Maria Vogt.

2 For the former see, e.g., Sextus Empiricus *M* 8.9 and for a Latin version, Cicero *De Fin.* 1.64. For the latter, see Sextus Empiricus *M* 7.203–204 or Plutarch *Adv. Col.* 1109b.

3 All translations of Epicurean texts are taken from Inwood and Gerson 1994 except where otherwise noted. However, I have adapted the translation of *phantasia* to this discussion.

4 Accordingly, the term "impression" would have replaced, e.g., "perception" due to the later debate among Stoics, Skeptics, and Epicureans concerning the nature of clear or manifest [*enargēs*] impressions.

5 For more on ancient criticisms of Epicureans on truth, see Aikin's chapter in this volume, "Skeptical Responses to Stoics and Epicureans on the Criterion."

6 Striker (1977: 130–1) argues that one should equate sensible objects [*aisthēta*] with impressions in this context.

7 Most Hellenistic philosophers agree upon the fact that only bodies cause motion.
8 Vogt 2016: 149–51. Vogt suggests a *factive* understanding of perception, according to which perception should be understood similar to knowledge as implying the claim that "every sense-perception is *of what is* and therefore is *true*" (151–2). My own approach is similar, although I advance it from a more historical perspective.
9 In fact, Sextus Empiricus (*M* 8.9) provides even a further determination of truth immediately after the previous one. However, this particular determination poses special problems that cannot be dealt with here. Verde (2018, 91–4) discusses this and newer approaches to the interpretation of this passage and shows that the determination cannot refer to the truth of perception.
10 For more on Epicurean atomism, see Robitzsch's chapter in this volume, "Epicureans on What There Is."
11 Lucretius (*DRN* 4.256–8) emphasizes that individual images are not perceived whereas a plurality of images is needed. A possible reason for this could be that due to the small size of the openings in the sensory organs, numerous images have to be received in order to account for the original size of the object. This problem and the ensuing consequences are discussed by Alexander of Aphrodisias. See Hahmann 2015 and Verde 2015.

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14

EPICURUS ON SENSE-EXPERIENCE AND THE FEAR OF DEATH

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The Epicureans are hedonists who believe that happiness lies in the proper pursuit of pleasure. Given their central focus on pleasure, it might initially seem a bit surprising that they devote so much energy to discussing death, since thinking about one's own mortality is certainly not high on most people's list of pleasant activities. Yet upon reflection, it makes sense that Epicureans are invested in our attitudes toward death for this very reason. For many people, death causes a paralyzing lack of pleasure; resolving that paralysis radically improves one's prospects for happiness. The Epicureans, then, believe that arguably the most important thing one can do to make one's life better is to rid oneself of one's anxiety about death. Anyone wracked by the fear of death surely cannot achieve tranquility [*ataraxia*], the ideal psychological state characterized by the absence of psychological pain and, at the same time, the presence of the greatest pleasure.

Of course, eliminating or even controlling one's fear of death is easier said than done. In this chapter, I examine the two key arguments against the fear of death found in the Epicurean tradition, noting the underlying assumptions that determine the relative strength of each argument. In the process, I introduce challenges to those central assumptions and gesture at some responses available to an advocate of Epicureanism. Setting aside whether the key arguments themselves succeed, the larger worry is that the arguments seem only to concern a person's fear of "being dead" (i.e. the state of annihilation or, for example, being in one's coffin). In the closing sections, then, I consider how other features of the larger Epicurean project address additional reasons one might fear death, including that one might not want to die young, painfully, violently, after one's children, etc. As a note to the reader, unlike most commentators, I do not think the Epicureans are so ambitious as to think their arguments can eliminate a person's fear of death. Rather, while they offer a set of arguments intended to eliminate some fears, they offer practical strategies for effectively controlling (but not eliminating) other fears.

The Experience Argument

We are fortunate to have two statements of Epicurus' central argument against the fear of death in his own words. The first appears in the *Key Doctrines,* a record of 40 short statements that undergird the Epicurean approach to living. The second appears in the *Letter to*

Menoeceus, a pithy letter addressed to a novice Epicurean that focuses primarily on the ethical dimensions of successful hedonism. The two arguments have the same upshot, but the line of argument is more fully traced in the *Letter to Menoeceus.* Taken together, they express what I will call the "Experience Argument." Quoted in their entirety:

> Death is nothing to us. For what has been dissolved has no sense-experience, and what has no sense-experience is nothing to us.
>
> (*KD* 2)

> Get used to believing that death is nothing to us. For all good and bad consists in sense-experience, and death is the privation of sense experience. Hence a correct knowledge of the fact that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life a matter for contentment, not by adding a limitless time [to life] but by removing the longing for immortality. For there is nothing painful in life for one who has grasped that there is nothing fearful in the absence of life. Thus he is a fool who says that he fears death not because it will be painful when present but because it is painful when it is still to come. For that which while present causes no distress causes unnecessary pain when merely anticipated.
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> (*Ep. Men.* 124–5)[1]

When Epicurus says "sense-experience," he means anything we can perceive through conscious awareness (i.e. that we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or consciously think, including the accompanying experiences of pain and pleasure). The upshot of the "Experience Argument" is that everything that is good or bad for us requires the ability to have conscious awareness, but death is the lack of conscious awareness, so death cannot be good or bad for us. For current purposes, we can formalize the argument as follows, with "P" standing for "premise," and "C" for "conclusion."

(P1) Everything good and bad requires sense-experience.
(P2) Death is the absence of sense-experience.
(C) Death is neither good nor bad.
(P3) It is irrational to fear something that is not bad.
(C2) It is irrational to fear death.

There is no disputing that the argument is formally valid. If all the premises are true, then the conclusion is true. The question is whether the argument is sound. Opponents of Epicureanism or anyone doggedly determined to fear death must undermine one of the premises in order to show that the argument is unsound. For reasons of exposition, let's begin with Premise 2.

(P2) Death is the Absence of Perception

In general, most contemporary critics of the Experience Argument accept Premise 2, since they agree with Epicurus that death is the end of conscious awareness—we do not survive our deaths or outlive our lives. However, people who believe that the dead perceive, whether in an afterlife, as ghosts, or in their caskets, deny that death is the absence of sense perception. If we hear, see, think, or feel pleasure and pain after death, then Epicurus's argument loses its teeth.

The Epicureans, though, think they have very good scientific reason to deny the existence of any postmortem consciousness. In brief, they are materialists about the soul, or in more common contemporary parlance, the "mind." The Epicureans believe that everything in the universe is made up of atoms and void, and the soul, just like every other object or thing, is a collection of atoms. Granted, "soul" atoms are different than the atoms that make up tables and chairs.[2] When suitably configured, soul atoms make conscious awareness possible, whereas the arrangement of atoms that form a table will never result in a conscious table. But when those soul atoms break apart at death, the consciousness that depends on their functional organization goes away. Death annihilates consciousness by dispersing the atoms.

At root, then, the Epicurean view that death eliminates consciousness is grounded in their physics and biology. Yet one might reasonably think that science does not particularly care how we feel about it. For example, it is simply true that water is H_20, and no amount of emotional turbulence will change that fact. While most people have no feelings about the molecular status of water, many people might find the fact of annihilation quite disheartening. The Epicureans, though, thought recognizing the truth of annihilation should provide comfort. One way to get at their thought is to reflect on the fact that many people, both then and now, find themselves wracked with anxiety about whether there is a heaven and a hell, and whether they will be consigned to eternal torment. The received literary tradition at the time of Epicurus did not offer an alluring picture of postmortem existence. Homer depicted the afterlife as a very dark place, and soldiers in the *Iliad* go there screeching and howling. When Odysseus makes an unscheduled trip to the underworld in the *Odyssey*, Achilles tells him that he would rather live as a manual laborer than as king of all the dead. Since Epicureans want to help people eliminate their anxiety, they think eliminating the fear of the afterlife would remove a great deal of anxiety.

What, though, of the people who anticipate an afterlife filled with joy and excitement? Plato, for example, believed the afterlife would be great for philosophers in particular! Some readers might not have the same fears of the afterlife that have historically troubled others. They might, in fact, be quite confident that they will have a very positive afterlife experience. For them, the prospect of an afterlife actually diminishes, rather than increases their fear of death, and annihilation dashes that expectation. If so, then Epicurus's atomism threatens to make matters worse for them on the emotional front. This is obviously not the place to arbitrate whether a person can reasonably believe in immortality. However, I think Epicurus offers something even for those who anticipate a pleasant afterlife.

Absent experience of the afterlife, even the most stalwart believer will likely find themselves with some doubts, at least on occasion. This is where Epicurus might step in. If those who believe in the afterlife have *any* suspicion that death might be annihilation, then Epicurus can say, "I have an argument for why annihilation will not be bad." If Epicurus's argument is strong, then they have reason not to fear death on condition of immortality *and* reason not to fear death on condition of annihilation. He offers, it seems, additional insurance. So, Epicurus remains relevant to everyone with even a sliver of a doubt about the likelihood of immortality. Again, though, most contemporary commentators accept Premise 2. The real problem, they think, is with Premise 1—that we must experience everything good or bad for us.

(P1) Everything Good or Bad for Us Depends on Sense-Experience

The problem with Premise 1 arises from the possibility that someone might be harmed without being aware of it. If we can suffer harm without consciously experiencing it, then Premise 1 would be false. The question, one might think, is whether it is true that "what you don't know can't hurt you." Imagine the follow scenario:

> One afternoon, Matthew takes some time to reflect on how well his life is going. His life, he concludes, is going very well indeed. He has recently received tenure at a well-respected university, he has good friends, a stable marriage, two pleasant children, and students who consistently give him great teaching evaluations. He is quite proud of all that he has accomplished.
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> In reality, though, he is being artfully deceived on a grand scale. His friends consider him merely convenient means to their own ends, his wife has been cheating for years, and his children despise him but need him to pay for their college education. His students give him good teaching evaluations out of sheer pity, and he received tenure on the basis of an administrative error that no one had the energy to correct. Matthew, through a combination of deception and obliviousness, is entirely unaware of all of these hard truths.

The relevant question is whether this mass-scale deception constitutes a harm to Matthew.[3] He is unaware of his situation and suffers no apparent adverse consequences. In fact, his ignorance produces pleasure of an intensity that many people never experience in life! According to Premise 1, Epicurus must believe that nothing bad is happening to Matthew because Matthew is not aware of the facts on the ground. Should he discover the deception, of course that would be remarkably painful. But absent discovery, Matthew suffers no harm.

Other possible counterexamples arise whenever circumstances thwart our significant "interests," even after our death. We might wonder whether Aristotle was harmed by the posthumous loss of his dialogues, even though he might have died believing they would be read with the same, or more, pleasure than those of Plato. We might wonder whether a broken deathbed promise harms the one who has died, given that she will never discover that, for example, Oxfam has used much of the untold riches she bequeathed her cats to save starving children instead. If someone's children, who seemed so pleasant when young, become ax-murderers after their parents' deaths, then one might wonder whether the parents suffer the harm of having an unsatisfied interest in raising productive members of society. In each of these cases, the dead never become aware of something that has happened posthumously to their interests or projects. Nevertheless, we might be tempted to say that they have in some sense suffered harm.

Philosophy, unfortunately, often depends on the intuitions of the people conducting the discussion, and it seems that reasonable people have intuitions on both sides of the question of unperceived harms. Some people think that some or all of these cases in which people lack awareness of setbacks in their interests, whether before or after death, constitute genuine harms to the individual. Epicurus claims that none of these living setbacks can be harms unless they are discovered, and no harms beyond the grave are ever discovered.

Epicurus himself would likely dismiss this objection without fanfare, since he is a hedonist through and through. Remember that for Epicurus, the good *is* pleasure, and the bad *is* pain. Even though the texts of the "Experience Argument" do not make this explicit, Epicurean hedonism requires subbing in "pleasure" for "good" and "pain" for "bad":

> (P1) Everything pleasant and painful for me requires sense-experience.

While it might make some sense, at least in a manner of speaking, to say that Aristotle's interests were harmed by the loss of his dialogues, it does not make much sense to say that Aristotle was *pained* by the loss of his dialogues. Similarly, it would not make sense to say that some set of dead parents are *pleased* by the success of their children, at least on the assumption that death is the absence of perception. Since we reasonably need the capacity

for consciousness to experience pain and pleasure, Epicurus might remind the reader that talking about benefits and harms as anything other than pleasures and pains signals a misunderstanding about the only things good and bad "in themselves"—pleasure and pain. Anything else is good or bad only insofar as it is instrumental to pleasure or pain. Someone else cannot have *your* pleasure or pain, so it might seem that good and bad (as pleasure and pain), really do require *your* sense-perception. One can see why Epicurus thinks his hedonism buys him the premise that good and bad require perception because he quite reasonably thinks that pleasure and pain require perception.

(C1) Death is Neither Good Nor Bad

Epicurus, then, has some reason to think his readers should accept Premise 1 and Premise 2 in light of his account of the physical world and his hedonistic model of benefit and harm. With respect to Premise 1, his physicalism maintains that the soul is a structural organization of atoms that separate at death, resulting in the end of conscious awareness and sense experience.[4] As such, death cannot be experienced because the material that enables experience breaks apart at death. With respect to Premise 2, Epicurus thinks that all benefit and harm lie in pleasure and pain. Given that the dead cannot feel pleasure or pain because they cannot feel anything, they cannot be harmed or benefitted at or after death. Anyone who believes in any other sort of harm rejects Epicurean hedonism. This is, again, not the chapter to fully evaluate either of these commitments, but one can see how Epicurus thinks he has an underlying argument for each of the key premises that ground the first conclusion: death is neither good nor bad.

Before moving to the second part of the argument, though, it is worth drawing attention to one important point. Namely, while the argument clearly sets out to show that death is not bad, it equally establishes that death is not good. Since death is neither pleasant nor painful, it can be neither good nor bad. Someone who wants positive feelings about death might be disappointed by the fact that Epicurus fails to show that death is good. Epicurus, though, would not see this as an inadequacy of the argument. Though Epicurus clearly aims to help people eliminate or ameliorate their fear of death by showing them that death is not bad, he does not, to invert the claim about fear, want people to hope for death because they see it as good.

Though Epicurus rejects the idea that death is good on the grounds that death makes pleasure impossible, he also makes a point of addressing those who maintain that death benefits because annihilation is better than living. Some of Epicurus' contemporaries did in fact believe that life is bad on the whole and that death is a comparable benefit that one should covet.[5] Death is, on such an argument, a relief from suffering, when the suffering is life itself. Epicurus primarily rejects such a mindset on empirical grounds, since he has good observational evidence that a life lived correctly is generally quite pleasant and enjoyable.

He also, though, rejects the view that annihilation is better than life on conceptual grounds. Specifically, Epicurus thinks the position is practically self-defeating; it cannot be meaningfully advanced by anyone unwilling to commit suicide. He argues that if his opponents really do think life is inferior to death, then they should choose the greater good and commit suicide. If they are not willing to commit suicide, though, he believes that they cannot actually think death is better than life and should stop saying they do. Their actions suggest that they actually prefer life, so they should stop advancing an argumentative position that they are unwilling to pursue. Epicurus considers the possibility that they are just "joking," but then he thinks they should stop talking to serious people about serious things (*Ep. Men.* 126–7). Life is good, but death is neither good nor bad.

(P3) It Is Irrational to Fear What Is Not Bad

One might think that Epicurus has essentially established what he needs in order to convince his readers that they should not fear death. Nevertheless, Epicurus adds an additional premise to the argument, and for good reason. Imagine someone who says, "Okay, Epicurus, I get it that once I die, it won"t be bad. But still, I fear it now in this time before I"m dead. It won"t be bad then, but it seems bad now." Epicurus argues that this imaginary objector suffers from a confusion about the rationality of fear. As he puts it, quoting again from the *Letter to Menoeceus*:

> [H]e is a fool who says that he fears death not because it will be painful when present but because it is painful when it is still to come. For that which while present causes no distress causes unnecessary pain when merely anticipated.
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> (*Ep. Men*. 125)

Calling people whom one hopes to benefit "fools" might not prove the best ministerial strategy, but setting that aside, Epicurus makes a compelling point that it does not make sense to fear future things that one knows will not be bad. Fear, one might think, simply *is* the anticipation of a bad event. If one knows something cannot cause one harm, then it does not make sense to fear it.

Imagine a similar case in which changing one's mind about scientific facts should change one's current fear. Someone might initially believe on the basis of hearsay or a bad medical study that the MMR vaccine for Measles, Mumps, and Rubella causes autism. He might then learn from a formidable authority that the study has been retracted as terrible science and that there are recent dangerous viral outbreaks that threaten infants too young to be vaccinated, as well as children and adults with weakened immune systems. If he is reasoning effectively, he should decide to vaccinate his child to protect the lives of other children, as well as to spare his healthy child the discomfort of painful childhood diseases. While we can imagine a person saying that he believes a vaccine will not cause autism, yet he currently fears that it will, we would be hard-pressed not to call him irrational. Like Epicurus, we might be tempted to call him a fool.

Similarly, Epicurus thinks that anyone who believes that death cannot harm them when it happens would be irrational to maintain that it is reasonable to fear death now. Epicurus would not deny that they *feel* fear; he would deny that their fear is rational in light of the facts of the world they themselves recognize. Epicurus, then, thinks everyone has good reason to accept Premise 3 that one should not fear what is not bad. Conjoined with the earlier conclusion that death is not bad, he takes himself to have brought his argument to completion—it is irrational to fear death now if you agree that it will not be bad.

Epicurus cannot have it so easy, though, since one might reasonably raise some questions about the relationship between reasons and emotions on which his argument seems to depend. At this point, I consider it useful to employ a set of terms that commonly feature in contemporary philosophical theories of emotions. I recognize, though, that Epicurus does not use such terminology and does not offer, at least in text we still have, his own account of the nature of emotions. We can only build a case on the basis of sparse textual evidence and our own efforts to make his philosophy as consistent and robust as interpretive charity allows.[6] I think two distinctions might prove helpful.

First, one might distinguish between cognitive and non-cognitive emotions. Cognitive emotions are those that essentially depend on consciously accessible beliefs and judgments; non-cognitive emotions, on the other hand, do not depend on consciously accessible beliefs

and judgments. Cognitive emotions are judgment-centric, while "non-cognitive" emotions can operate judgment-free. A cognitivist account of grief, for example, would claim that my grief is or depends on the judgment that I have lost something of value. Among the "non-cognitive" emotions, one might include basic animal drives, raw feelings, or psychological attitudes that guide action without conscious initiation or oversight. More importantly, one might include emotions that appear to conflict with our rational judgment about what is good and bad.

Second, one might distinguish between "reasons-responsive" and "reasons-resistant" beliefs and desires. Responsive emotions can be changed through rational argumentation, while resistant ones cannot. This leaves open the possibility that an emotion might be "cognitive," thereby depending on a judgment that one would prefer to change, yet that judgment might not be open to revision though reasoning. In other words, a cognitive emotion could be "reasons-resistant."

In light of these distinctions, we can see that Epicurus must think that his reader's fear of death depends on a consciously accessible belief or desire that is reasons-responsive. In other words, fear needs to be the sort of thing that can be altered in light of rational argumentation of the sort offered by deductive argumentation or convincing empirical evidence. He need not think that his reader will encounter the Epicurean argument once, accept its conclusion, and then (presto!) her fear disappears. Perhaps it will take many days of regular reflection. Epicurus in fact directs his followers to "[p]ractice these and related precepts day and night, by yourself and with a like-minded friend, and you will never be disturbed either when awake or in sleep" (*Ep. Men.* 135). However much practice it takes, though, the activity aims to use arguments, evidence, and entreaties to alter and then preserve consciously accessible attitudes that are amenable to rational persuasion.[7] If you truly accept the conclusion, then your fear eventually absents the scene.

The natural objection should be clear: what if some or most of our fear of death does not depend on consciously available belief states that are open to rational persuasion? Perhaps some of our fear is hard-wired into our animal nature, or perhaps some of it arises from beliefs or desires that cannot be altered by reason. Even if *all* of our fear of death depends on consciously accessible judgments, if *none* of those judgments are reasons-responsive, then Epicurus is offering nifty arguments with no significant psychological uptake. Note, though, that an objector on this front is not denying Premise 3. They might concede that it is irrational to fear something that will not be bad. What they deny is that we are able to eliminate our irrational fear by using reason. The fear is irrational, but our reason is fighting with shadows.

Epicurus, though, reasonably thinks his argument should be efficacious against at least some fears of death, in the same way that learning that MMR vaccines do not cause autism will make most people vaccinate their children without fear that it will cause autism. If his arguments work for many people (and he thinks they do), then one clearly cannot say it works for no one. Science and argumentation can convince most people that some things are nothing to fear, and Epicurus thinks his science and argumentation should make death one of those things.

Still, Epicurus's argument can only go so far, and perhaps the greatest objection to the "Experience Argument" is that it only eliminates or mitigates the fear of "being dead." If Epicurus convinces me that there is no such thing as "being dead" in the sense of experiencing it, I might concede that it makes no sense to fear it and thereby cease fearing being dead. But one might think the "Experience Argument" does nothing to tackle a fear of dying early, before one experiences the completion of one's projects. Likewise, it does nothing to eliminate the fear of a painful death. After all, even the Epicureans take pain to be bad, and many deaths are in fact painful, so one might think they should concede that

one might reasonably fear a painful death. Finally, one might prefer not to die in particular ways (e.g., alone, by accident, violently). None of these fears concern "being dead." Instead, some of them concern the only thing Epicureans take to be intrinsically bad—pain. One might wonder, then, whether Epicurus has anything to say about these fears. Before briefly gesturing at some Epicurean responses to other expressions of the fear of death, it is worth a brief foray into another famous argument against the fear of being dead—the Symmetry Argument.

The Symmetry Argument

The "Symmetry Argument" might have been original to Lucretius, a Roman Epicurean who articulated and celebrated the doctrines of Epicurus in his book-length poem, *On the Nature of Things*. Scholars disagree about whether the "Symmetry Argument" significantly strengthens Epicurus' case, but no one denies that it achieves a novel rhetorical and therapeutic effect. Lucretius entreats his audience: "Look back now and consider how the bygone ages of eternity were nothing to us. Here, then, is a mirror in which nature shows us the time to come after our death" (*DRN* 3: 972–4).[8]

The Epicurean commitment that death is "nothing to us" clearly undergirds the "Symmetry Argument." Lucretius, though, introduces a new reason to think we should not resent the non-existence that follows death. While we generally focus our anxieties on post-mortem non-existence, he draws our attention to the period of non-existence that preceded our birth. Lucretius believes, not unreasonably, that most people do not have negative feelings about the period of non-existence before they were born. They do not, for example, resent missing out on the American Civil War. If, as Lucretius argues, we should have identical attitudes towards all periods of our non-existence, and we do not resent the non-existence preceding our birth, then we should not resent the non-existence that follows our death. The argument can be roughly formalized:

(P1) Our life is preceded and followed by our non-existence.
(P2) We should have the same attitude towards all periods of our non-existence.
(P3) We do not resent the non-existence preceding our life.
(C) We should not resent the non-existence following life.

While some might quibble with Premise 3 (perhaps you do resent missing out on the American Civil War!), Premise 2 is clearly the greatest threat to the argument's soundness. Different periods of my non-existence might justifiably merit different affective responses.

One way commentators have challenged Premise 2 is to claim that the time after my death is time that *I* might have had, whereas time before my birth was impossible for *me*, understood as someone with my particular personal identity. Anyone born before me would not meaningfully be me, but someone else. By contrast, the person who might have lived longer than I will live would have remained meaningfully me. It is in fact impossible, on this line of reasoning, to resent not having premortem time without simultaneously wishing the destruction of my particular existence. The time after my death, though, is time that *I* would have had, and so my losing that time merits negative feelings.

Some scholars have tried to rescue Lucretius from similar objections, both metaphysical and commonsense, but engagement with those defenses lies outside the scope of an introductory article.[9] The more pressing concern remains that even if we grant the argumentative rigor and psychological impact of both the "Experience Argument" and "the Symmetry Argument," neither seems sufficient on its own to address our myriad fears of death.

The Other Fears

One thing is certain: Epicurus did not intend the "Experience Argument" to stand on its own. It is located in only one of the 40 *Key Doctrines*, and it is only a few sentences of the *Letter to Menoeceus.* To those who have complained that the "Experience Argument" is inadequate without the acceptance of other Epicurean commitments, Epicurus would likely respond, "Yes, of course that"s true. A crankshaft does not an engine make." Here my own, I think charitable, interpretive commitment asserts itself. I do not think that Epicurus thought he could eliminate all of our fears of death through reason alone because I do not think he thought all of our fears were based in false beliefs that were subject to alteration.[10] In what follows, I briefly canvass three key commitments that I think are intended to help jointly control, though not eliminate, other fears of death—the Epicurean taxonomy of desires; the Epicurean focus on friendship and security; and the Epicurean belief that psychological pleasures can make life worth living, even as one suffers physical pain. I only have space to address these in outline, but some of them are discussed in greater detail in other chapters in this volume.[11]

Life Projects and Early Death

Epicurus' three-fold taxonomy of desires is designed to help an Epicurean tailor her desires in a manner that removes anxiety, ushering in lasting tranquility. The starting assumption is that unfulfilled desires cause physical and/or psychological pain. The more intense one's desire, and the greater the likelihood that it will go unsatisfied, the more intense the pain. Desires, for Epicurus, fall into one of three classes: the natural and necessary, the natural and unnecessary, and the unnatural and unnecessary (*Ep. Men.* 127, *KD* 26, 29–30). Epicurus thought you cannot jettison the natural and necessary desires, since, among other things, they are for the things that keep you alive and that cause pain if unsatisfied. Examples include food, water, shelter, and physical safety. Natural and necessary desires come as part of the standard package of being an animal, and Epicurus thinks they are relatively easy to secure in their most rudimentary form, at least under most circumstances. Natural and unnecessary desires are more extravagant versions of the natural and necessary desires, and they are the sorts of things you should welcome if they are available, but not excessively trouble yourself about if they prove difficult to secure. Examples include fancy food, wine, and more comfortable digs. Epicurus thinks people who do not expect or make a habit of fine dining will appreciate it more than people who trouble themselves to acquire tasty food and eat it all the time (*Ep. Men.* 130).

The real difficulty for human beings comes in the unnatural and unnecessary desires, which aim at competitive goods of acquisition, including power, wealth, and fame. These desires, the Epicureans think, should be largely jettisoned, since they are difficult to secure and difficult to maintain once secured, so they carry anxiety along with them in all their stages. One might, for example, seek fame or power, which are hard to get and even more difficult to sustain. With the guiding assumption that the aim of Epicurean philosophy is to eliminate pain, especially anxiety, it makes sense that they would recommend cutting such desires to the quick.

One might be wondering how this relates to death. You might begin by asking *why* you think an early death is bad. For the most part, Epicurus thinks people fear an early death because it means their important life projects are truncated or never begun. An early death means one does not finish the Great American Novel, make partner, retire to Greece, have children, see one's children marry, etc. The problem with an early death is that it makes it

impossible to accomplish or enjoy the projects that we think give our lives meaning and whose success is contingent on future time.

Epicurus, though, will first point out that most, if not all, of those projects are not strictly necessary for happiness. Some might be natural (e.g., having children, enjoying the pleasures of natural beauty in Greece, or having a fine meal with a good friend), though those natural desires are not strictly necessary for happiness. They should be welcomed if available, and one will appreciate them more than other people for their rarity, but they are not the sort of thing in which one should invest psychic energy if an opportunity does not present itself.

The greatest number of ambitious life projects, Epicurus thinks, are both unnatural and unnecessary, and express an empty desire for vainglory. The unnatural desires are worth throwing overboard because they only bring needless anxiety for goods of negligible or no value. So, if the reasons one fears dying young stem from one's desires beyond the class of natural and necessary desires, then one should alter one's perspective on the natural and unnecessary desires and eliminate the unnatural desires. Epicurus is surely right to call attention to the link between our fear of an early death and our desires for competitive goods and future success. One might conclude that psychic investment in the success of one's projects is worth the abundant anxiety that comes along for the ride, but Epicurus thinks the person who wants a pleasant, anxiety-free life should reorient her values.

Death and Friendship

On my reading of Epicurus, which will to some people seem unorthodox, the most effective way to combat most of the other varieties of the fear of death is to cultivate healthy friendships. By "friends," I do not mean simply intimate friends, but also like-minded individuals who have a great capacity to express mutual concern. Friends make one's life more secure, they produce the most stable pleasures, and they make it possible to die more peacefully.

Critics of Epicureanism have long insisted that Epicureans cannot actually be friends. For the most part, this objection arises from the conjunction of Epicurean hedonism with a belief that friendship should not be self-interested, and one's own pleasure seems intrinsically self-interested.[12] Granted, almost all ethical theories run into problems when it comes to relationships, since we tend to think that we should not have to justify our love interests in light of, say, Kant's Categorical Imperative or Mill's Principle of Utility. When one's lover asks why you love her, you should not respond,

> Well, I formulated a maxim according to which I intended to enter a loving relationship with you, and then I used my reason to determine whether I could universalize that maxim, and yes, I could. It expresses an imperfect duty of beneficence. So, I chose you for fulfilling that duty.

An at least slightly more acceptable answer is, "I get great pleasure from being with you." In that sense, Epicurus has something going for him in his account of friendships—good friendships are really pleasant.

The problem, though, is that friendships are not always pleasant, and they can sometimes become systematically unpleasant. If hedonists enter relationships for their own pleasure, then they should abandon their friends when their friends become wholly unpleasant. A friendship for pleasure of this sort definitely seems shallow and fickle! I cannot here fully defend the Epicureans on this front, but I do not think this is really a problem. An

Epicurean wants secure friendships with the sort of people who provide a certain kind of pleasure, namely the kind of pleasure one receives from virtuous and reliable people who give one confidence. Sometimes one's friend might be a bit neurotic or difficult, but if she hauls herself out of bed to meet you at the emergency room at two in the morning, then that clears a pretty high bar, even if she is thinking something along the lines of, "Emily would reliably do the same for me if I were in need, and I will probably be in need in the future and not want to be alone." It does not seem troubling to me that a friend would come because she would not feel pleasure leaving you in distress or thinking of herself alone in a similar situation. In addition, if people become unreliable or make one's life insecure, then it does not seem a weakness of the Epicurean model of relationships that one should consider severing such relationships.

If one chooses one's friends wisely, then one will likely have friends for life in circumstances of health and illness. In addition, one will have friends who will not abandon the care of those who remain alive after one's death, for example one's children or aged relatives. The final doctrine of the *Key Doctrines* in fact ties these ideas together:

> All those who had the power to acquire the greatest confidence from [the threats posed by] their neighbors also thereby lived together most pleasantly with the surest guarantee, and since they enjoyed the fullest sense of belonging they did not grieve the early death of the departed as though it called for pity.
>
> (*KD* 40)

The Epicureans think that life as an Epicurean with other Epicureans is the best life available, and as such, one has reached the pinnacle of a good life, so an early death is not pitiable. Admittedly, one might want a longer time spent living the best life possible, so that being deprived of a longer Epicurean life would count as a harm. Perhaps Epicureans should maximize the duration of the Epicurean life. Yet there is something a bit odd about resenting death after having accomplished everything one set out to accomplish in life. The rest, one might think, is gravy, and gravy is a natural and unnecessary desire. It should be welcomed if available, but should not cause anxiety if circumstances put it out of reach.

A Painful Death

Surely, though, the Epicureans have trouble making sense of why one should not fear a painful death! They concede that pain is the only thing that is bad in itself, and many deaths are painful, so it seems rational to fear that very likely pain. The Epicureans have an admittedly uncompelling response to this worry. Epicurus claims that moderate physical pain can be endured and counterbalanced by significant psychological pleasure and that intense pain portends a swift demise (*KD* 4). Perhaps no claim in the Epicurean corpus has suffered as much ridicule as this one. One initial point of interpretive charity is that medical emergencies really did tend to kill a person pretty quickly in antiquity. Medical realities are now radically different.

What, though, of the claim that physical pain can be counterbalanced by psychological pleasure? It is certainly true that thinking about pleasant things will not make the pain of having one's arm amputated without anesthesia go away. Yet it is not implausible to think that many people with moderately painful terminal illnesses find the continued support of friends and family, along with the opportunity to reflect on a life well-lived, sufficiently pleasant to mitigate the physical pain and make life worth living. This is especially true, studies are suggesting, about those patients who choose to die in their homes under hospice

care, rather than in an ICU under sedation. The idea that dying surrounded by friends can make a painful death tolerable is not ridiculous, and Epicureans are supposed to have many friends and a history of pleasant experiences to reflect on as their life comes to a close. They would be foolhardy to think a painful death is pleasant, but they might not be wrong to think a good Epicurean will have the psychological resources to deal with it.

Conclusion

The Epicureans think the many manifestations of our fear of death serve as a grave threat to psychological equanimity and prudent decision-making. They believe, quite rightly, that any theory that aims to produce tranquility must ensure as little anxiety about death as possible. We have many fears of death—of being dead, of dying early, of dying painfully, of dying alone, etc. Epicurus takes himself to offer strategies for dealing with all of these fears. That one needs to accept his philosophical system of science and value in order to achieve the desired effect would not trouble him in the least. Epicureans readily concede that reciting the "Experience Argument" to oneself in the dark will prove ineffective for altering the life commitments that underlie our other fears of death. But it does, they think, at least help root out one deep confusion.

Notes

1 I use Inwood and Gerson (1994) for all passages by Epicurus.
2 See Annas (1992) and O'Keefe (2013) for more on Epicurean physics and philosophy of mind.
3 This discussion is significantly indebted to Nagel (1970).
4 For more on the Epicurean notion of soul, see Robitzsch's chapter in this volume, "Epicureans on What There Is."
5 For example, the Cyrenaic philosopher Hegesias was apparently so effective at arguing that death is superior to life that he earned the nickname "Hegesias the Death Persuader," and was banned from entering towns for fear that he would incite a suicide epidemic (*DL* 2: 93–5).
6 See Tsouna (2006) for an extensive discussion of the relationship between rationality and the Epicurean account of emotions.
7 See also McOsker's chapter in this volume, "The Medicine of Salvation: Epicurean Education as Therapy."
8 Lucretius (2001).
9 See Rosenbaum (1989) and Kaufman (1996) for further discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the Symmetry Argument.
10 See Austin (2012) for an argument that Epicurus thought the fear of violence was ineliminable.
11 On the classification of desires and pleasures, see Rider's "Epicureans on Pleasure, Desire, and Happiness"; on friendship and security, see Christensen's "Epicureans on Friendship, Politics, and Community."
12 For discussion of Epicurean friendship, see Evans (2004) and O'Keefe (2001).

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15

SKEPTICAL DEFENSES AGAINST THE INACTION OBJECTION

Whitney Schwab

Introduction

Imagine that your friend is standing in the street. As a car approaches, she looks in its direction and moves out of its way. An unremarkable event, to be sure. But suppose your friend tells you that she is a skeptic. By this she means (in part) that she never accepts anything as true: although the world appears to her to be various ways, she never accepts or believes that the world is as it appears to her to be. Now her moving out of the way might seem quite remarkable. Doesn't it require that she at least believed that the car was approaching? Wouldn't her profession of skepticism be incompatible with her moving?

These questions suggest thoughts that lie behind a central objection that was posed against ancient skepticism: that it overturns life [*to zên anairein*] by leading to total inaction [*apraxia*].[1] As is well known, however, there are various ways of understanding what counts as an action, and different versions of the inaction objection concern the compatibility of skepticism with different kinds of action. In this chapter, I examine how several ancient skeptics responded to versions of the inaction objection. Although we have some evidence that skeptics responded to Epicurean inaction objections,[2] most of our evidence attests to responses to Stoic versions and so I focus on those. Due to space constraints, I focus on our most well attested responses: those of Arcesilaus, Carneades, and Sextus Empiricus.

The Philosophical Origin of the Inaction Objection

Arcesilaus initiated the Academy's skeptical phase by making its central philosophical method the practice of arguing for and against any issue that came up for debate.[3] In keeping with this practice, skeptics did not develop philosophical positions of their own but, rather, responded critically to those offered by other philosophers. When responding to the inaction objection, then, skeptics exploit Stoic philosophical resources. Thus, to understand their responses we must develop a basic understanding of certain elements of the Stoic system.[4]

At the core of Stoic philosophy of action is the notion of an impression (*phantasia*, also often translated as "appearance"). An impression is a mental state that represents the world to its possessor.[5] Several Stoic distinctions between kinds of impressions are important to

us here. First is the distinction between rational [*logikai*] and non-rational [*alogoi*] impressions. Rational impressions–that is, the impressions had by rational animals, such as mature human beings–differ from non-rational impressions in that the former have propositional content. That is, all rational impressions are representations of the world as being a certain way, where the way the world is represented as being can be specified by a declarative sentence (e.g., the impression that *a car is approaching*, that *I am hungry*, that *the Gods are providential*).[6] Rational animals also have the ability to assent to [*sunkatatithêmi*] or withhold assent from [*epechô*] an impression.[7] To assent to an impression is to take that impression to be true, and so to come to believe that the world is a certain way; to withhold assent from an impression is to refrain from taking that impression to be true, and so to form no belief.

The Stoics distinguish further between impulsive [*hormetikê*] and non-impulsive impressions.[8] Impulsive impressions represent certain actions as appropriate/inappropriate, good/bad, to be done/not to be done, and the like.[9] Assenting to an impulsive impression gives rise to an impulse [*hormê*], which, in turn, generates an action. So, for example, if someone assents to the impression that *it is appropriate to get out of the way of the car*, they experience an impulse to get out of the way of the car, which causes them to get out of the way of the car.

The final distinction to note is between kataleptic [*katalêptikê*] and non-kataleptic impressions.[10] While scholars intensely debate the correct interpretation of the kataleptic impression, for our purposes the crucial point is that kataleptic impressions are guaranteed to be true.[11] So, for example, a kataleptic impression that *it is appropriate to get out of the way of the car* is an impression that one could have only if it is, in fact, appropriate to get out of the way of the car.[12] Since kataleptic impressions are guaranteed to be true, a subject can assent to them without the possibility of error. The Stoics designate the mental state that results from assent to a kataleptic impression "*katalêpsis*," and they held that one ought to assent only to kataleptic impressions.[13] By assenting only to kataleptic impressions, the Stoics claimed, we can acquire *epistêmê*, the cognitive achievement that, in keeping with a long tradition, they held to be necessary for happiness.

We can now see how the inaction objection arises. In keeping with their argumentative practice, skeptics marshal arguments against the existence of kataleptic impressions.[14] With those arguments in hand, skeptics argue as follows:[15]

(P1) The wise person assents only to kataleptic impressions (a tenet of Stoicism)
(P2) But, kataleptic impressions do not exist
(C) Therefore, the wise person never assents

The thesis of *akatalêpsia* (non-existence of *katalêpsis*) and the resulting advocacy of universal suspension of assent are the main positions associated with Academic skepticism (at least until the time of Philo).[16] A central scholarly debate concerns whether Arcesilaus and later Academic skeptics committed themselves to *akatalêpsia* and universal suspension of assent or merely offered them as dialectical moves against the Stoics.[17] For our purposes, however, what is immediately relevant is how the Stoics responded to the challenge that the wise person universally suspends assent. Plutarch suggests that, at least initially, the Stoics insisted that some impressions warrant assent (i.e. are kataleptic). When that failed, the inaction objection came "from the Stoa, like a Gorgon's head" (Plutarch (*Adv. Col.* 1122A9–11)).[18] According to the Stoics, if one suspends assent universally, one cannot act, since assent to an impulsive impression is a necessary condition of action. We have arrived, then, at the inaction objection.

Why Respond at All?

Before examining skeptical responses to the inaction objection, we should consider why they bothered to respond at all. After all, even if it turns out that skepticism is incompatible with action, or with a particular kind of action, can't the skeptic just say, "so much the worse for us"? Although we have evidence that some skeptics may have responded this way—Cicero mentions some "hopeless cases" who advise us to "blame nature" (*Acad.* II.32)—most of our evidence testifies to ingenious attempts to secure the compatibility of skepticism and action. The reason ancient skeptics went to such lengths is that, unlike skepticism today, ancient skepticism was presented as a way of life and, indeed, as a way of living a happy life. If skepticism makes action impossible, the whole point of skepticism is undermined.

Arcesilaus' Response

Plutarch reports that Arcesilaus responded to the inaction objection by alleging that assent is not necessary for action:

> The soul has three movements—impression, impulse, and assent. The movement of impression we could not remove, even if we wanted to; rather, as soon as we encounter things, we get an impression and are affected by them. The movement of impulse, when aroused by that of impression, moves a person actively towards appropriate objects, since a kind of turn of the scale and inclination occur in the commanding-faculty. So those who suspend judgment about everything do not remove this movement either, but make use of the impulse which leads them naturally towards what appears appropriate.… For action requires two things: an impression of something appropriate, and an impulse towards the appropriate object that has appeared; neither of these is in conflict with suspension of judgment. For the argument removes opinion, not impulse and impression.
>
> (*Adv. Col.* 1122B7–D2)

Arcesilaus claims that action requires only that a subject be in a certain condition and that something appear appropriate to them. So, for example, if someone is thirsty and has the impression that *it is appropriate to drink this water*, an impulse to drink this water is generated, and they will drink this water. They do not *also* need to assent to the impression (i.e. to form the opinion) that *it is appropriate to drink this water*. On this picture, Arcesilaus presents what Harald Thorsrud (2010: 67) calls a "stimulus-response" model of action.

The Stoics are susceptible to this kind of response because, as we saw above, they think that only rational animals have the power to assent, but they also held that non-rational animals experience impulses and act in at least some sense.[19] Indeed, non-rational animals engage in rather complex, goal-directed behavior: a beaver picks up a stick to build a dam, a lion chases a gazelle in order to eat it, and so on. On the Stoic view, such behavior is compatible not only with not assenting, but with not even having the power of assent. Thus, Arcesilaus responds to the inaction objection by maintaining that skeptics can act in the same way that, on the Stoic theory, non-human animals can act.

Although Arcesilaus' stimulus-response model might explain how skeptics can engage in goal-directed behavior, it is unclear whether it can explain how skeptics can live happy lives. Even if skeptics can, as it were, get their bodies up and moving without assent, if there are no kataleptic impressions how can they regulate their actions in the way required

for happiness? After all, non-human animals do not lead happy [*eudaimôn*] lives.[20] This worry led Arcesilaus (and later skeptics) to posit a "practical criterion," that is, a criterion that, while not guaranteeing truth, enables skeptics to conduct life and attain happiness. Sextus reports Arcesilaus' move as follows:

> But since it was necessary to investigate the conduct of life, which is not of a nature to be accounted for without a criterion on which happiness too—that is, the end of life—depends for its trust, Arcesilaus says that, not[21] suspending assent about everything, he will regulate his choices and avoidances and generally his actions by the reasonable, and by going forward in accordance with this criterion he will act rightly. For happiness comes about through prudence (*phronêsis*) and prudence lies in right actions, and the right action is that which, when done, has a reasonable defense. The person who pays attention to the reasonable will therefore act rightly and be happy.
>
> (*M* VII.158; tr. Bett, modified)

So, Arcesilaus maintains that skeptics will act rightly and, so, be happy by regulating [*kanonizô*] their choices and avoidances by "the reasonable" [*to eulogon*]. Arcesilaus is again appropriating, and in this case manipulating, Stoic doctrine. The Stoics distinguish between appropriate actions [*kathêkon*] and right actions [*katorthôma*]: appropriate actions are "those which, when performed, have a reasonable defense" (Stobaeus II.85,13–86,4), and right actions are certain appropriate actions performed in a certain way.[22] The Stoics further maintain that right actions are virtuous actions and constitute a happy life. Thus, in the quoted passage, Arcesilaus is claiming that virtuous action and, so, happiness actually consists in what the Stoics view as merely appropriate actions. And since an action can have a reasonable defense (i.e. be appropriate on the Stoic view and right on Arcesilaus' proposal) even if it is not caused by assent to a kataleptic impression, Arcesilaus maintains that happiness is available to the skeptic.

It is not clear, however, how the two elements of Arcesilaus' response cohere with each other.[23] On the one hand, the claim that impressions give rise to impulse and action without assent suggests that skeptics exert no discriminatory power over the impressions in accordance with which they act. Rather, skeptics will simply be in a certain condition, something will appear appropriate to them, and they will act. On the other hand, the claim that skeptics *regulate* their choice and avoidance suggests that they exert at least some discriminatory power over the impressions that will generate impulses and actions. It is possible that, for Arcesilaus, the reasonable somehow delimits the kind of impression that will "turn the scale" in the commanding faculty and generate impulses in the absence of assent. Nevertheless, there is a little discomfort in saying that action can be caused simply by an impression generating an impulse, without the intervention of assent, and saying that skeptics regulate their choice and avoidance.

In fact, this discomfort might be present in the passage just cited. Sextus writes, "Arcesilaus says that, *not* withholding assent about everything, he will regulate his choices and avoidances and generally his actions by the reasonable." Many scholars, noting that Arcesilaus cannot say that skeptics *do not* withhold assent about everything, alter the "*ou*" ("not") to "*ho*" ("the"), giving the sense "Arcesilaus says that *the person who* withholds assent about everything will regulate his choices and avoidances and generally his actions by the reasonable." However, since the manuscripts all have "*ou*," it is best to retain it. We should then understand Sextus, as Bett suggests (2005, 34 n. 71), to be making a polemical point: what Arcesilaus himself said is that skeptics regulate their choice and avoidance by

the reasonable; Sextus objects that someone who does this does *not*, in fact, suspend assent about everything. In other words, Sextus is drawing out what he sees as an implicit commitment that goes against what Arcesilaus explicitly said.

Carneades' Response

We can understand Carneades' response to the inaction objection as answering, in part, to shortcomings in Arcesilaus' response.[24] Plutarch tells us that the Stoics Chrysippus and Antipater extensively argued "for the thesis that there is neither acting [*prattein*] nor impulse without assent and that those who maintain that upon the occurrence of an appropriate impression impulse follows immediately without yielding or assent are spreading fictions and empty theses" (*On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1057A). Clearly, Chrysippus and Antipater were targeting Arcesilaus' response to the inaction objection. There are two ways of understanding Plutarch's report. One possibility is that Chrysippus and Antipater maintained that acting *in any sense* requires assent and outright denied that impressions could generate impulses without assent. Another possibility is that Chrysippus and Antipater argued that impulses and actions *of a certain kind* require assent. One way to connect these two possibilities—while respecting the Stoic view that non-rational creatures act in at least some sense—would be if Chrysippus and Antipater argued that impulses and actions of a certain kind require assent and, further, that rational creatures can only perform actions of this kind (i.e. that the kind of animal-like behavior Arcesilaus claimed skeptics perform is simply not available to rational creatures).[25]

To understand this complication, we need to consider assent in a little more detail. According to the Stoics, assent "depends on us" (i.e. it is *eph' hemin*).[26] Because assent depends on us, we bear a special relationship to behavior that is caused by assent. In particular, we are responsible for such behavior and can be appropriately praised or blamed for it.[27] Assent, then, is necessary not for engaging in any physical or mental behavior whatsoever, but for engaging in behavior for which one is responsible. However, it is only actions, understood in the restricted sense of behavior for which an agent is responsible, that can be virtuous and, hence, that can constitute a happy life.[28] Chrysippus and Antipater's objection, then, is that on Arcesilaus' model, this kind of "distinctly human" action is not available and, so, neither is a happy life (from now on I will use "action" to refer exclusively to this distinctively human kind of action, and "behavior" for the more general category).

Carneades took this challenge seriously. Whereas Arcesilaus simply denied that action requires assent, Carneades provided an account of a kind of mental reaction to impressions that could function analogously to Stoic assent in the generation of action. Carneades coupled this with a sophisticated account of the kind of impression to which skeptics can permissibly have that mental reaction, namely the plausible impression.[29] Thus, according to Carneades, skeptics can act because there is a kind of mental reaction they can have to an impression that is sufficient for action, and they can act in a deliberate manner and attain happiness by having that reaction not to kataleptic impressions (because there are none), nor to just any impression, but to plausible impressions. I will elaborate on each element, starting with the plausible impression.

Plausible Impressions

Carneades' account of the plausible impression begins by noting that every impression has "two dimensions, one in relation to the thing that appears, the second in relation to the

person having the impression" (*M* VII.168; tr. Bett, modified). The former dimension is its objective status—whether it is true or false; the latter dimension is its subjective status—whether it strikes its possessor as true or false. Carneades labeled an impression that strikes its possessor as true a "plausible impression" [*pithanê phantasia*]. The basic idea is simple enough: whether an impression strikes its possessor as true does not depend on whether it is, in fact, true. False impressions can strike someone as true: consider, for example, the impression that *Bob is in the street* caused by an expertly made replica of Bob. True impressions can strike someone as false: consider, for example, the impression that *the Earth rotates around the sun*.

Carneades also noted that, since impressions do not stand isolated from one another but, rather, "hang on one another, like a chain" (*M* VII.176), the plausibility of an impression does not depend solely on its intrinsic features. An impression is more or less plausible depending on how well it coheres with our other impressions and beliefs, as well as on whether, in reflecting on the conditions of the impression's formation, we find those conditions to be conducive to forming true impressions.[30] So, for example, a person can enter a dimly lit room and form the impression that *there is a snake in the corner* and this impression can strike them as true even though it is caused by a coil of rope.[31] If the person notices that what appears to be a snake appears not to move, appears to have a non-snake like color, and so on, the impression that *there is a snake in the corner* will become less plausible. If the person further takes stock of the poor lighting conditions, the impression will become less plausible still. Conversely, the more an impression coheres with other impressions and the more favorable its formation-conditions seem, the more plausible it will become.

What is crucial for Carneades' debate with the Stoics, however, is that no matter how plausible an impression is, it can nevertheless be false.[32] This is why the plausible impression serves as a practical criterion and not an infallible criterion of truth.

Approval

Cicero provides detailed evidence concerning Carneades' notion of approval:

> After expounding these points, Clitomachus[33] added: "The wise person is said to suspend assent in two senses: in one sense, when this means that he won't assent to anything at all entirely[34]; in another, when it means that he will restrain himself even from giving responses showing that he approves [*adprobet*] or disapproves [*inprobet*] of something, so that he won't say 'yes' or 'no' to anything. Given this distinction, the wise person accepts the suspension of assent in the first sense, with the result that he never assents; but he holds on to his assent in the second sense, with the result that, by following what is plausible (*ut sequens probabilitatem*), wherever that is present or deficient, he is able to reply 'yes' or 'no.' Since the person who keeps himself from assenting to anything nevertheless wants to move and act," Clitomachus maintained, "there are still impressions of the kind that excite us to action; and likewise, there are still responses we can use when questioned on either side, by just following our impressions of the matter, provided we do so without assent."
>
> (Cicero *Acad.* II.104; tr. Brittain, modified)

Although this passage is difficult, some things are reasonably uncontroversial. First, Carneades distinguishes two kinds of mental reactions to an impression, one of which is

permissible for skeptics, one of which is impermissible.[35] Carneades presents both as kinds of assent, but also calls the permissible kind of reaction "approval" [*approbation*] and "following" [*sequens*]. I will, for clarity's sake, reserve the term "assent" for the impermissible kind of mental reaction and "approval" for the permissible kind. Second, approval is supposed to enable a person who universally withholds assent to act and philosophize. In other words, the distinction responds to the inaction objection.

It is very difficult, however, to understand the difference between assent and approval. Indeed, some philosophers suggest that there may be no coherent distinction in the vicinity.[36] At a general level, most interpreters agree that Carneades' basic point is that the Stoics lump together two importantly different things under the heading "assent" and that by prizing them apart we will see that action is consistent with skepticism. Suzanne Obdrzalek (2006) helpfully categorizes interpretations of approval into two main camps: according to what she calls "weak interpretations," approving an impression does not involve any commitment to its truth; according to what she calls "strong interpretations," approving an impression is, in some way, a matter of taking it to be true. In what follows, I offer a few examples from each camp.

Weak interpretations maintain that approving an impression is not in any way a matter of taking it to be true. So, for example, Striker takes the distinction between assent and approval to amount to that between (in the practical sphere) judging that one should do a thing and deciding to do it and (in the theoretical sphere) committing to the truth of a proposition and using a proposition (for example, as a hypothesis) (1996c: 112). Bett takes the distinction to be between "cases where one takes an impression to be true [i.e. assent]… [and] the significantly different cases [i.e. approval] where one does not do so—where one allows an impression to influence one's behavior, or one's verdict, but without passing judgment on its truth" (1990: 14). Frede distinguishes between, on the one hand, having a view (i.e. approval) and, on the other hand, taking a position or making a claim (i.e. assent), where the key distinguishing feature of the latter is that the subject has the further thought that a proposition is true (1997a: 128). Each of these authors understand assent to be taking something to be true and so interpret Carneades to be identifying a kind of mental reaction that is sufficient for action but does not have that feature.

The weak interpretation holds wide support. Obdrzalek (2006), however, has recently presented strong arguments against it. Although she puts it slightly differently, her most powerful objection against the weak interpretation, I think, is that it renders Carneades' view no real improvement over Arcesilaus' picture. If approval is a matter of allowing an impression to influence one's behavior *without* taking it to be true, then even non-rational animals approve of impressions in this sense. But if, as I argued above, Carneades proposed the notion of approval in part to improve upon Arcesilaus' picture, approval must be a kind of mental reaction to impressions that animals cannot have. For this to be the case, Obdrzalek contends, approval "must be subject to explanation in terms of reasons" (2006: 259) and, thus, must somehow be a matter of taking an impression to be true. So, for example, Obdrzalek thinks that "[t]he crucial difference [between assent and approval] lies in the degree of credence involved in their assenting. While the Stoic takes his impressions to be true, the Academic takes them to be merely probably true" (2006: 263).

I find Obdrzalek's argument against the weak interpretation compelling and, so, am attracted to the strong interpretation. However, I find Thorsrud's recent version of it problematic. Thorsrud thinks that the prohibition against skeptics assenting *entirely* amounts to a prohibition against assenting with "absolute confidence" (2018: 57). Although this is in line with Obdrzalek's position, Thorsrud goes further and argues that assenting entirely "corresponds to the Stoic's strong assent" (ibid.). Thus, Thorsrud understands Carneades to

be invoking the Stoic distinction between weak and strong assent. Although this suggestion is intriguing, I do not think that it can be what Carneades has in mind. For the Stoics, the distinction between weak and strong assent is not a difference in subjective confidence. Rather, the Stoics thought that a subject assents weakly to an impression just in case they can be rationally compelled to give up that assent; a subject assents strongly just in case they cannot be rationally compelled to give up that assent. One is in the latter condition just in case 1) the impression they assent to is kataleptic and 2) they hold all their other beliefs as a matter of *katalêpsis*. So, strong assent, according to the Stoics, is not a special kind of assent in the sense that one can strongly or weakly assent to an impression independently of how they respond to all their other impressions. Rather, there is just assent, and if one assents only to kataleptic impressions, then all of one's assents are strong. Thus, I do not think that Carneades' distinction between approval and assent can correspond to the Stoic distinction between weak and strong assent.

So, where does this leave us? What is clear is that Carneades thought that the ability to approve plausible impressions allows skeptics to act and philosophize without assent. Thus, the overall tenability of Carneades' picture depends on whether we can make sense of the distinction between assent and approval. I have surveyed several ways of understanding it, and, without firmly committing myself, indicated that I currently take the strong interpretation to be likely true. I suppose, then, that I approve it, at least as the strong interpretation understands approval.

Sextus Empiricus' Response

Sextus Empiricus is our main proponent of Pyrrhonian Skepticism.[37] He repeatedly reports that skeptics take the side of ordinary life, meaning in part that skeptics act in the way that ordinary, non-philosophical people act.[38] Yet, in all our extant material, Sextus only explicitly responds to a version of the inaction objection in a brief discussion in *Against the Ethicists* (*M* XI.162–67). In fact, Sextus nowhere uses the term "*apraxia*." Rather, he speaks of those who charge the skeptic with inactivity [*anenergêsia*]. Although many scholars treat "inactivity" as equivalent to "inaction," I think that they have different connotations:[39] inactivity concerns any behavior whatsoever, while inaction concerns behavior of the kinds discussed above (i.e. animal-like goal-directed behavior, and the distinctly human kind of behavior). Although the discussion in *Against the Ethicists* is Sextus' only *explicit* response to the inactivity challenge, it proceeds in a way that has clear connections to a discussion in *PH* I.21–24 where Sextus characterizes the criterion that prevents skeptics from being inactive [*anenergêtos*]. Thus, while the *PH* discussion is not explicitly presented as a response to the inactivity objection, it is relevant to determining how the skeptic can be active. In this section, I outline the relevant elements of Pyrrhonism, positioning them against the Academic variety of skepticism, and then consider the discussion in *Against the Ethicists* and *PH*.

Somewhat surprisingly, Sextus tells us that skepticism is a specialized kind of ability, namely an "ability to produce opposites, opposing things which appear and are thought of in any way whatsoever, from which we come first to suspension of judgment, because of the equipollence in the opposed items and accounts, then after this to tranquility" (*PH* I.8).[40] Although the details are controversial, I understand Sextus to mean that skepticism is an ability to produce, in response to any proposition P put forward by a dogmatic philosopher, a proposition P* that is incompatible with P *along with equally compelling arguments in favor of P* that the dogmatist offers in favor of P.* The italicized portion of this characterization is crucial: there is no special ability in simply offering a proposition that is

incompatible with a proposition advanced by a dogmatist. Rather, the skeptical ability consists in being able to produce equally compelling *arguments for* or *considerations in favor of* incompatible propositions. As a result of being confronted with equally compelling arguments in favor of P and P*, skeptics find that they are forced to suspend judgment whether P. Sextus, however, repeatedly qualifies the sense in which skeptics withhold assent: as the above discussion suggests, skeptics withhold assent insofar as it is a matter for argument [*hoson epi tô(i) logo(i)*].[41]

Sextus' qualification of the sense in which skeptics withhold assent coheres with his report that Pyrrhonian skeptics, like Carneades' skeptic but unlike Arcesilaus', assents in at least some sense to impressions.[42] Sextus tells us, for example, that skeptics "assent to the feelings that are forced upon them by impressions" (*PH* I.13), that they "do not overturn anything which leads [them], without willing it, to assent in accordance with a passive impression" (*PH* I.19) and that they "do yield to things which passively move [them] and lead [them] necessarily to assent" (*PH* I.193). Thus, unlike Carneades, Sextus does not isolate a distinct *kind* of assent skeptics can give but, rather, a distinct *way* in which skeptics can assent: in particular, skeptics can assent when their assent is *forced*. [43]

In the continuation of the *PH* I.13 passage cited above, Sextus gives an example of the kind of scenario in which assent is forced: "for example, [skeptics] would not say, when heated or chilled, 'I think I am not heated (or: chilled)'" (*PH* I.13). I understand Sextus to be saying that, when heated, skeptics will assent to the impression that they are heated and, so, will say "I am heated." The idea, then, is that someone can have the impression that they are heated in such a way that they are forced to assent to it.

With this understanding of Pyrrhonism in hand, we can consider Sextus' discussion of the inactivity objection. Sextus says the following:[44]

> Hence one also needs to look down on those who think that [the skeptic] is reduced to inactivity … because, since the whole of life is bound up with choices and avoidances, the person who neither chooses nor avoids anything in effect renounces life and stays fixed like some vegetable.… In saying this, of course, they do not understand that the skeptic does not live in accordance with philosophical argument (for as far as this is concerned he is inactive), but that in accordance with non-philosophical practice he is able to choose some things and avoid others.
>
> (*M* XI.162–66; tr. Bett, modified)

The above discussion should make the idea that skeptics do not live in accordance with philosophical argument but in accordance with non-philosophical practice readily intelligible. Skeptics withhold assent concerning any proposition P only on the basis of marshaling equally strong arguments in favor of and against P. They thus never act as a result of accepting an argument, such as an argument that they should act in a certain way. Nevertheless, just like ordinary, non-philosophical people, skeptics sometimes find themselves forced to assent to impressions and, in this way, just like ordinary, non-philosophical people, skeptics can act.

Unlike Carneades with his plausible impression, Sextus nowhere provides a general characterization of the kind or kinds of impressions to which skeptics assent. However, in discussing the skeptical criterion in *PH* I.21–24, he tells us that, "attending to what is apparent (i.e. to impressions), we live undogmatically in accordance with everyday observances—for we are not able to be utterly inactive" (*PH* I.23; tr. Anna and Barnes, modified). Thus, these everyday observances are precisely how the skeptic can be active. According to Sextus there are four main kinds of everyday observances:

> By nature's guidance we are naturally capable of perceiving and thinking. By the necessitation of feelings, hunger conducts us to food and thirst to drink. By the handing down of customs and laws, we accept, from an everyday point of view, that piety is good and impiety bad. By teaching of kinds of expertise, we are not inactive in those that we accept. And we say all this undogmatically.[45]
>
> (*PH* I.24; tr. Annas and Barnes, modified)

We can understand these four groups as sources of impressions to which skeptics assent and, hence, that can guide action. It might seem, then, that each one is designed to respond to an objection that skepticism leads to inactivity.[46] Of course, each source need not be responding to an objection explicitly given by some opponent; perhaps Sextus is, as it were, nipping certain potential objections in the bud.

The idea, then, is that, in response to the objection that skepticism leads to an inability to perceive or think, Sextus contends that nature's guidance can force skeptics to perceive and think. If someone were to object that skeptics cannot eat or drink, Sextus contends that in virtue of being hungry and thirsty, skeptics will eat and drink (we can see affinities to Arcesilaus' stimulus-response model, with the modification that skeptics are forced to assent in such cases). More robustly, and more controversially, Sextus says that skeptics "accept, from an everyday point of view, that piety is good and impiety bad." So, insofar as a skeptic is raised in a culture where, say, sacrificing is viewed as good and blasphemy as bad, the skeptic will assent to the impression that sacrificing is good and blasphemy is bad, and will sacrifice and not blaspheme. Such a skeptic would not think that they have arguments or even reasons to support the claim that sacrificing is good and blasphemy bad. A helpful way to think of this is that, if we were to explain why the skeptic believes that sacrificing is good and blasphemy bad, the answer would be something like "that's just the way they were raised," where we cite the causal origin of the skeptic's belief. We would not say something like, "because they take F, G, and H to be reasons in favor of thinking that sacrificing is good and blasphemy bad," which would cite something like a justificatory basis for the belief. Lastly, Sextus says that skeptics can adopt an expertise [*technê*] and so be active in accordance with it. Sextus himself was a doctor, after all. Thus, Sextus at least presents skepticism as compatible not merely with simple activities, but with a range of rather robust and complicated activities.[47]

Notes

1 Plutarch uses the word "inaction" in discussing such an objection (*Adv. Col*. 1122A9–11). Cicero speaks of skeptics being charged with "doing away with all action from life" [*omnem actionem tollit e vita*] (*Acad.* II.39; cf. II.31) and Sextus deals with allegations that skepticism leads to inactivity [*anenergêsia*] (*M* XI.163). Antecedents to the inaction objection are found in Aristotle's discussion in *Metaphysics* Γ of the consequences that would follow for someone who did not accept the principle of non-contradiction.
2 Plutarch, *Adv. Col*. 1122DE.
3 Cicero, *Acad.* II.16.
4 For more detailed discussion, see Hensley's chapter in this volume.
5 Aetius IV.12.1–5.
6 DL VII.51, 63, SE *M* VIII.70.
7 Cicero *Acad.* I.40; SE *M* VIII.397.
8 Stobaeus II.86,17–87,6.
9 For further discussion, see Inwood (1985: Ch. 3) and Brennan (2003: 265–9).
10 Two common translations of "*katalêptikê*" are "cognitive" and "apprehensive," but both have serious drawbacks. The "-*ikos*" suffix indicates that the impression is able to produce *katalêpsis*

(Smyth, §858.6), and so the translation of "*katalêptikê*" should be influenced by the translation of "*katalêpsis*," which I discuss below (n. 13).

11 *M* VII.152. For a sampling of the scholarly debate, see Striker (1996a and 1996b), Frede (1983 and 1999), Annas (1990), Perin (2005), Nawar (2014), and Shogry (2018).

12 I here assume the controversial position that the Stoics posited kataleptic impulsive impressions (for defense of this assumption, see Brennan (1996: 324–25)).

13 As the translation of "*katalêpsis*" is a vexed issue, I stick with a transliteration (and, so, transliterate "*katalêptikê*" as well). Two standard translations are "cognition" and "apprehension," but it is becoming increasingly popular to translate "*katalêpsis*" as "knowledge" (as suggested by Long and Sedley (1987: 257–8) and adopted by Brittain (2001), Perin (2005) and Shogry (2018)).

14 See Cicero *Acad.* II.47–58, 79–90 and *M* VII.402–11.

15 See Cicero *Acad.* II.68, 77; cf. *M* VII.155–57.

16 See Brittain (2001) for an authoritative examination of the Academy under Philo.

17 For discussion and references, see Brittain (2008) concerning Arcesilaus and Allen (2012) concerning Carneades.

18 As Obdrzalek notes, the image of the Gorgon's head "is inapt—the Stoic does not paralyze the Academic with the *apraxia* charge, so much as reveal that the Academic threatens to paralyze all of us" (2012: 370).

19 DL VII.86 and Stobaeus II.86,17–87,6.

20 Many scholars distinguish a version of the inaction objection that targets the compatibility of skepticism and any kind of life from a version that targets the compatibility of skepticism and a happy life. See, among others, Striker (1996c), Brittain (2006: xxiii), Vogt (2010), and Obdrzalek (2012).

21 I comment on the "not" ("*ou*"), which initially seems out of place, below.

22 Stobaeus II.93,14–18 and V.906,18–907,5. The Stoics worked with another, possibly related, notion of what is reasonable that applies most directly to propositions [*axiomata*]. In this sense, a proposition is reasonable if it has "more tendency to be true than to be false, like 'I shall live tomorrow'" (DL VII.76). Since Sextus says that Arcesilaus explicitly invoked the notion of a "reasonable defense," I think it more likely that he adopted the notion of the reasonable that I discuss in the main text.

23 For versions of this objection, see Maconi (1988: 251–2) and Bett (1989: 65–6).

24 Sextus tells us, immediately after the passage just cited, that "Carneades positioned himself on the criterion not only against the Stoics but also against *everyone before him*" (*M* VII.159).

25 I thank Jessica Moss for pointing out this latter complication. In this chapter I am officially agnostic as to whether Chrysippus and Antipater argued further that rational animals simply cannot perform animal-like actions.

26 *M* VIII.397; cf. Cicero *Acad.* I.40.

27 Alexander *De Fato* XXVI.196.21–197.3.

28 DL VII.86.

29 "Plausible" translates "*pithanon*" (in Greek) and "*probabile*" (in Latin). Two other common translations are "persuasive" and "probable." For important discussions see, among others, Bett (1989), Allen (1994), and Obdrzalek (2006).

30 *M* VII.176–89 and *PH* I.227–29. Carneades maintains that if an impression coheres with other impressions and beliefs, it is "undiverted" [*aperispastos*], and if it seems to have been formed in favorable conditions, it is "thoroughly examined" [*diexôdeumenê*]. See Allen (1994), whom I follow closely here, for excellent discussion of these further steps in Carneades' picture. Although Sextus presents an impression's being undiverted and thoroughly examined as independent of plausibility (for example, he speaks of the impression that is "plausible, undiverted, and thoroughly examined" (*M* VII.184)), I think it is best to understand these further tests as increasing (or decreasing) the plausibility of an impression.

31 I adapt this example from *PH* I.227–28 and *M* VII.187–88.

32 *M* VII.175.

33 Cicero presents Clitomachus as presenting the position of Carneades, who himself wrote nothing.

34 An important question concerns what "entirely" [*omnino*] modifies: either "*rei nulli*" ("nothing") or "*adsentiri*" ("to assent"). If the former, it emphasizes that there is nothing to which the wise person will assent. If the latter, it qualifies the way in which the wise person won't assent to anything, namely entirely. Thorsrud (2018) takes it in the latter way and thinks that this provides the key to solving the problems we will consider.

35 Intense debate surrounds whether Carneades thought that the permissible kind of mental reaction leaves skeptics with opinions [*doxai*]. In fact, subsequent Academics debated just this issue, with Clitomachus claiming "no," and Philo and Metrodorus claiming "yes." For discussion, see Striker (1996c), Brittain (2001), and Thorsrud (2018).
36 For this suggestion, without necessarily endorsement, see Brittain (2006: xxvii).
37 For discussion of the difference between Academic and Pyrrhonian Skepticism, see Striker (1996d and 2010) and Ziemińska's chapter in this volume.
38 *PH* I.16, 24, II.102, III.2.
39 Striker, for example, simply writes, "Sextus' term [for Plutarch's term *apraxia*] is ἀνενεργησία" (1996c, 99 n. 27). Vogt (2010), however, is sensitive to the difference.
40 This translation is from Morison (2011, 269), whose discussion I closely follow in this paragraph.
41 *PH* I.215; cf. I.20, 227, III.65. For discussion of this difficult phrase, see Brunschwig (1990) and Frede (1997b, 10–12). In my discussion, I follow Frede in taking the Pyrrhonian skeptic to hold at least some beliefs. This is a controversial issue, however, and many interpreters take Pyrrhonism to be incompatible with the possession of any beliefs. For discussion, see the papers collected in Burnyeat and Frede (1997) as well as Fine (2000), Perin (2010), Morison (2011), and Vogt (2012). In Schwab (2013), I reject the main philosophical argument that interpreters advance in favor of thinking that Pyrrhonian skepticism is incompatible with the possession of any beliefs.
42 Sextus discusses the difference between the kind of assent Pyrrhonists can give and Carneadean approval at *PH* I.229–30.
43 Vogt suggests that, "the notion of 'forced assent' … turns the Stoics' theory upside down. According to the Stoics, it is the mark of assent that it is 'in our power.' Sextus here devises a kind of assent that lacks precisely this core feature" (2010: 174). It is unclear, however, whether the sense in which the Stoics think that assent "depends on us" is incompatible with assent being forced, in the sense of being an unwilled or necessary response to certain impressions. Many interpreters think that, for example, the Stoics held kataleptic impressions to necessitate assent, but that such assent nevertheless depends on us. On the specific question whether kataleptic impressions force assent, see, among others, Frede (1983: 84) and Brittain (2014). For more general discussion of the sense in which the Stoics think certain things depend on us, see Bobzien (1998).
44 In this passage, Sextus also addresses a charge of inconsistency [*apemphasis*], but I focus only on the charge of inactivity.
45 The word I have translated "undogmatically" is "*adoxastôs*," which literally means "without opinions." Many interpreters take Sextus' use of this word, which is frequent, to be a clear indication that skeptics do not hold opinions or belief. I think that this is a mistake: Sextus first uses the word in *PH* I.15 shortly after introducing the distinction between permissible and impermissible *dogmata* in I.13. I think it should thus be understood anaphorically on that distinction, and to mean in effect "without the impermissible kind of *dogma*," hence my translation "undogmatically" (which follows Inwood and Gerson). We might expect a word like "*adogmatikôs*," but this does not seem to have been a Greek word. The first word that appears with the alpha-privative and "*dogma*" is "*adogmatistos*," and that not until the fourth century CE at the earliest (*TLG*).
46 This is how Vogt understands this discussion. See her (2010, 174–7) for detailed discussion.
47 For helpful discussion and comments, I would like to thank James Allen, Jessica Moss, Michael Nance, and Simon Shogry.

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16

SKEPTICAL RESPONSES TO STOICS AND EPICUREANS ON THE CRITERION

Scott Aikin

Stoicism and Epicureanism are both posited on significant revisions to what people think about themselves, the world, and what is valuable. In both cases, the core commitment is that false beliefs contribute to human misery, so philosophical critique of those beliefs and their correction is of utmost importance. With Epicureans, once we correctly see the world as composed of atoms and void, we no longer fear gods or death, and we live a life cultivating our capacities for enjoying natural pleasures. With Stoics, once we correctly see the transience of things and the value of self-possession, we live a life of duty and reason. The key with both revisionary programs is that because false belief is so costly, we must have a means for sorting true beliefs. We, then, must have a criterion for truth.

A philosophical problem arises at this stage of the reasoning. It is termed *the problem of the criterion*, and it can be captured by noting that if we need to correctly sort truths from falsities, then we must have an appropriate criterion for that task. But for us to find this criterion, one that we can see as reliably distinguishing truth from falsity, we must have already identified the relevant truths and falsities in order to judge that the criterion does well.[1] This is an especially problematic situation for revisionary philosophical programs like Epicureanism and Stoicism, since the revision must be to so many of the beliefs we already hold. So, much of common sense will not be a resource to inform our choice of one criterion or another. Consequently, the case for a criterion must be free-standing for these revisionary programs. The challenge of free-standing arguments for a criterion, as will be shown by the skeptical responses to both the Epicureans and the Stoics, is that the criteria identified are either insufficient for the significant revisionary program they serve (which will be the result for the Epicureans), or they are so demanding, it is unclear any belief or appearance could satisfy them (which will be the result for the Stoics). The skeptics, of course, must answer the question as to what is to be done without a criterion, and the radical Academic, modest Academic, and Pyrrhonian skeptics have distinct answers.

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Epicurus held in his *Canonics* that there are three criteria for truth: feelings [*pathē*], basic grasps [*prolēpses*], and sensations [*aisthēseis*] (DL 10.31). Regarding feeling as the

criterion, Epicurus held that pleasure and pain are the principal determinations for whether an action should be taken or avoided (DL 10.34). The principle of value underwritten by this view is the familiar Epicurean hedonist commitment that pleasure is the sole good and pain is the sole bad. As Epicurus notes in his *Letter to Menoeceus*, "pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life" (DL 10.128). Importantly, this criterion of feeling is primarily a *practical,* as opposed to *cognitive*, criterion, but it is a criterion that determines what truths there are in terms of what is best to prefer or avoid.

Turning to cognitive criteria, basic grasps [*prolēpses*] are universally held ideas, memories, and notions of what commonly occurs in the world. They are our rough conceptions of objects of inquiry, and our understandings of the meanings of our words. For example, when asked what a general term like "human" means, competent speakers call up a general picture of a human being (DL 10.38). And it is from these basic grasps that we begin our investigations. We would not be able to form meaningful questions if our words and notions did not have these rough meanings behind them.[2]

One thing to notice about both basic grasps and feelings as criteria is that they are special applications of the third criterion, sensation [*aisthēsis*].[3] Basic grasps are recollections of presentations of objects, and so are dependent on sensation for their content. Pleasure and pain, too, are particular reactions to sensations, concurrently felt or presented to the mind. As Plutarch reports, the Epicureans held that "you need but have the sensation and be made of flesh, and sense will present pleasure as a good" (*Adv. Col.* 1122 D.27). One way to see the three criteria, then, is that sensation is the most fundamental criterion, and basic grasps and feelings are subsidiary or dependent criteria. Sextus Empiricus reports that the Epicureans held that "the base and foundation of all is the evidence of sense" (M 7.216).

Epicurus and the Epicureans held that *all sensations are true* (DL 10.32; Lucretius *DRN* 4.499; Cicero *DND* 1.25.70; Plutarch *Adv. Col.* 1009E, and Sextus M 7.206 and M 8.63). Let us refer to this view as AST. There are three arguments for AST: the argument from the skins, the argument from parity, and the argument from explanation.

The argument from the skins is that, given the Epicurean theory of how perception works, all sensations are true. The Epicurean fundamental ontology is that there are only atoms and void, so the challenge of a theory of perception is to explain how sight, in particular, works. The theory is that objects are constantly shedding thin skins of themselves. Epicurus terms these thin object skins *images* [*eidola*], and as these images stream off bodies they travel through the air and present us with the shapes of the things (DL 10.50). Given this continuous connection with the objects of our perceptions, our sensations are never in error (Lucretius *DRN* 4.330). Falsehood and error, rather, are introduced with the intrusion of our opinions occasioned by these sensations. If we stick to what the senses provide us, we will not have false beliefs.

The second argument for AST is the argument from parity. It begins with the observation that all sensations carry the same evidential weight. One sensation cannot overrule or refute another. Given that sensations are the basic criterion, there are no more fundamental criteria to overturn one sensation in favor of the other. Lucretius argues:

> If the senses were false, will reason be competent to impeach them when it is itself entirely dependent on the senses? If they are not true, all reason is rendered false.
> (*DRN* 4.480)

Reconstructed, the overall argument seems to be between three options: the senses are either a) always, b) never, or c) sometimes truthful. The only intelligible option, given the parity of sensations and that we do have knowledge, is that they are always truthful.

1 We have knowledge.
2 All sensations are of equal epistemic weight.
3 Sensations are either: all false, all true, or some false and some true.
4 If all sensations are false, we do not have knowledge.
5 If some sensations are false and some true, then they are of different epistemic weight.

Therefore: all sensations are true.

The argument from parity, it should be noted, depends on an anti-skeptical background assumption, that we have knowledge. The argument, then, is that AST is the explanation for the fact of knowledge.[4] It could be objected that this argument begs the question against the skeptic, but, as Lucretius notes, denying that we have knowledge is self-refuting, since those who hold the skeptical view must think they know the difference between knowledge and ignorance (*DRN* 4.477; see also *KD* 23).

The final Epicurean argument for AST is that from explanation. Epicurus reasons that sensations are real in the same way that pains are. Given that we explain our own actions and those of others in terms of what we sense and how we feel, for those explanations of our actions to be accurate, those states of sensation must be real. A basic principle of Epicurean physics is that things that do not exist cannot explain anything—so if we explain a person's actions in light of something they felt or a sensation they had, those feelings and experiences we use to explain the behavior must exist.

> The reality of separate perceptions guarantees the truth of our senses. Seeing and hearing are just as real as feeling pain. […] For all our notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact, or by analogy, or resemblance, or composition. […] And the objects presented to madmen and to people in dreams are true, for they produce effects—movements in the mind—which that which is unreal never does.
>
> (DL 10.32)

The argument from explanation depends on the thought that sensations and pains must be real in order for us to be affected by them. Further, our concepts are derived from sensations, and those sensations must be real in order for our concepts to have content.[5]

The Epicurean commitment to AST has two significant consequences. The first is that perceptual errors are not explained by the senses being deceptive, but by the addition of some interpretation or judgment. Epicurus holds that "falsehood and error always depend on the intrusion of opinion" (*Ep. Hdt.* 50), and Sextus Empiricus reports that Epicureans reason as follows:

> [P]resentations [*phantasai*] are all true, but opinions [*doxai*] are not all true. […] Of opinions, then, according to Epicurus, some are true and some are false; the true being those which testify for, and not against, the evidence of sense, and the false those which testify against, and not for, that evidence.
>
> (*M* 7.24)

Errors are due, as Lucretius explains, to inferences "added by our own minds" (*DRN* 4.465).

The second consequence of AST is a commitment to a strict form of empiricism. If sensation is the primary criterion and error arises from going beyond what the senses support, then, as Epicurus holds, we must "attend to present feelings and sense perceptions, whether

those of humankind in general or those peculiar to the individual, and also attend to the clear evidence available" (*Ep. Hdt.* 82). The result of this line of reasoning is that opinions can be confirmed as true by sensation's testimony or the senses may testify against them—as one may have, for example, progressively better or worse sensory evidence that one's friend is approaching. And so sensation is the criterion for testing our beliefs—for whether they are true and whether they are false. Alternately, there may be opinions that are non-evident, in that sensations neither attest *directly* for or against, but sensations may *indirectly* support or undercut. For example, Epicurus holds that the void exists, since were the void not to exist, there could be no movement. Since the senses directly attest to the fact of movement, they provide indirect support for the view that the void exists (and against the view that the void does not exist). So, in this case, given other theoretical commitments, that an opinion is consistent with, or *not testified against*, by the senses, we have reason to hold it true, especially when sensation attests against its competitors. So, as Sextus explains it, "confirmatory testimony and lack of contrary testimony form a criterion of truth for a thing, but lack of confirmatory testimony and contradictory testimony of falsehood" (M 7.216).

Skeptical criticisms of the Epicureans on the criterion focused primarily on AST. The challenges come in three forms: the argument from variance, arguments from hallucination, and the argument from evacuation.

The skeptical argument from variance begins with the simple thesis that different subjects see things differently. Moreover, the same person, under different conditions, will perceive things differently. Consider that when ill or drunk, a person will see things differently from how they would when not. Or consider the fact that things far away lose their sharper visible edges—so, a tower that is clearly rectangular up close will seem fuzzier and rounder on the edges from far away. Moreover, some sense modalities conflict—when the oar of a boat is submerged in water, it appears to our sight to be bent, but we would discover that it feels straight to our touch if we were to run our hands down the oar. Our sensations can conflict, even when we do not vary the subjects or relations to the object (Cicero, *Acad.* 2.19). And so, if we vary who is the subject, the subject's conditions, or the relation between the subject and the object, the sensations vary. The skeptical argument concedes that all sensations are equally credible (as Epicurus held in the parity argument), but since there is no means to arbitrate the contradictions between these sensations, we must suspend judgment. The most explicit argument from variance is on display in the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus (DL 9.78–88 and *PH* 1.20–148).[6]

The Epicurean response to the variance phenomenon is to index the truth of all sensations to the conditions under which they are undergone. Lucretius holds that illusions, such as the bent oar, are a problem only because of the "dubious opinion that our mind adds on its own" (*DRN* 4.468). The sensations of touch and sight do not strictly *contradict* each other. Each sense modality gives information relevant to its own sphere—touch is about extension and position, sight is about how things look. These are not contradictory unless one's mind adds to the information given by these sensations. This indexing strategy extends to conflicts of sensations of the same sense for varied subjects. Recall that sensations are caused by skins thrown off their originary objects. For things far off, their skins must travel long distances to our eyes, and so they must pass through the air. They, like flags flown in a stiff breeze, are slightly abraded (*M* 7.209; *DRN* 4.357). And with variance of sensations between people, it turns out that our varied physical makeup will make us more sensitive to some impingements than others. The world provides a jumbled and mixed set of impressions; with sensation, individuals sense in ways coordinate with what their bodies are receptive to. Consequently, Lucretius reasons, "particulars previously suited to a person's taste are now unsuited to it; others prove better adapted to it, and these penetrate the pores and produce a bitter sensation" (*DRN* 4.668–671; see also Plutarch *Adv. Col.* 1109D).

It should be clear that the indexing strategy for sensation significantly reduces the content of the testimony of the senses.[7] So if all sensations are true and the tower appears small and fuzzy-rounded-edged from far off, the truth of *that* sensation is not that the *tower* is small and fuzzy-round-edged, but that the *skin of the tower* that reached the subject's eye is small and fuzzy-edged. *The truth* of what the sensations attest to is now different from what the skins-model of sensation promised—namely, that sensations accurately represent their originary objects because they share the shape and color of their originary objects and are presented continuously by them (*Ep. Hdt.* 49). This no longer seems quite as accurate, given the indexing thesis, because the variance phenomenon has shown, given the skeptical critique, that the skins may not retain all their information in their trip to or through our sense organs. Further, it seems that much of the more conflicting information provided is only selectively sampled by sensations.[8]

The second skeptical challenge to AST is that hallucinations seem not only a counter-example to the core doctrine of the truth of all sensations, but they seem a counter-example to the indexed version of the view, too. By indexing the truth of varied sensations to the subject and the conditions under which the object is perceived, the Epicureans had hoped to maintain that the information is still about *a real object* provided by sensation. So, even though there are illusions about bent oars in water, sight still accurately represents how oars *look when in water*. With the indexing strategy, it follows that sensations, despite their variance, are all still true, but true about their objects, given the conditions under which they are sampled. But *hallucinations* carry no information about objects. Illusions are generated when objects are seen under unusual conditions, but hallucinations don't have objects to be distorted or indexed. So, when Agamemnon's son, Orestes, is hounded by Furies after avenging his father's murder by killing his mother, Clytemnestra and her accomplice Aegisthus, he is not *really* hounded by Furies or anything like them to be indexed. The Furies are not illusory impressions of real objects, but rather are impressions not indexed to any objects (see *M* 7.63). Madmen and dreamers, too, are in the grips of things that do not exist. How are their sensations true, even qualifiedly, about anything? The indexing strategy that worked so well with illusions and variance will not work on hallucinations.

The Epicurean response is to return to the argument from explanation. These sensations—Orestes' hallucinations of the Furies, the madman's delusions, and the dreamer's visions—are all, still, *real*. Epicurus reasoned that since hallucinations and dreams cause those having them to react as they do, they must thereby be real (DL 10.32). So, the hallucinations and dream-visions are real, because were they not real, they would not cause Orestes to run like he's being chased by Furies (*M* 8.63). The Epicurean view, then, connects *the truth of the sensations* with *the reality of the sensations*. Sextus Empiricus reports the view to come to the following:

> Epicurus reports that all sensations are true and existent. For there is no difference between saying it is "true" and saying that it is "subsisting."
>
> (*M* 8.9)

Given this interpretation, AST now just means that all sensations are real. That seems considerably less informative and less useful as a criterion for correcting a wide variety of standing human knowledge. This move has, by the skeptic's lights, undone the promise of the indexing strategy for variance, since indexing at least was able to maintain that there is information about something beyond and causing our sensations in the indexed way of reading them—as one can still make inferences about the objects on the basis of the

indexed sensations one receives from them. But with this strategy of pressing the truth of sensations into their existence, it is unclear that they can serve as a criterion for truths beyond whether they are or are not.[9] Sextus Empiricus closes his criticism of the Epicurean response to the hallucination challenge by noting that the whole objective of providing a criterion was to sort trustworthy appearances from those which are not, but Epicurus' doctrine gives us only a criterion for acknowledging the appearances as existing, nothing more than that (*M* 8.66).

The final skeptical challenge to AST is the argument from evacuation. Given the two-stage dialectical progression from i) the Epicureans indexing impressions in response to the variance problem to ii) the conflation of existence with truth for the problem of hallucinations, the final skeptical observation is that, as Cicero wryly puts it, the Epicureans have "parried a lighter blow to leave themselves open to a heavier" (*DND* I.25.70). The problem is that given the argument from the skins, sensations can be produced only by existing bodies—that's why they are always true. But given the Epicurean strategy with hallucination, it seems that this is not always the case, since hallucinations are not derived from real objects at all. The skeptical argument proceeds as follows. Assuming that all sensations are equally trustworthy (as taken by the argument from parity), and some impressions (namely, hallucinations) are not evidence of external objects, then none are evidence of external objects. Epicurus was explicit in delineating the proper method that one not go beyond what is supported by sensation, and if one abides by this methodological commitment, then one is not appropriately grounded in holding that there are bodies. Plutarch reports the depth of this skeptical challenge:

> And here is an end to [the Epicurean's] tenet that all sensations are true and none … false, if you make it proper for one set of them to proceed to make assertion about external objects, where you refuse to trust the others in anything beyond the experience itself.
>
> (*Adv. Col.* 1121D)

Sextus, too, holds that once Epicureans make this distinction between sensations caused by objects and those not, there must be a higher criterion for distinguishing these, since no sensation can refute any other (*M* 8.65). The consequence is that all of the empirical reasons Epicurus had to support his theory of bodies, the metaphysics of atoms, now has no grounding beyond the immediate sensations presented to him. The theory, both taking sensation as the central criterion and taking the fundamental ontology to be atoms and void, are evacuated with the concession that hallucinations are true, too.[10] From the skeptic's perspective, this is a crushing blow to the entire Epicurean program.

The Epicurean philosophical program was designed as a significant revision to many beliefs people held about the nature of the world, the gods, and human nature. The criteria Epicurus proposed for this revision needed to pass a high level of scrutiny in order for this revisionary program to have the foundation it needed. The skeptical critiques of the Epicurean criteria show that though sensations exist, and so are true (in that restricted sense), they do not play the role of sorting more significant theses they must in order for the revisionary philosophical program to be plausible.

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The Stoics held that false beliefs put one out of touch with one's purpose, so one cannot play one's proper role in the world (DL 7.87 and 135; Plutarch *Stoic. Rep.* 1049f; Cicero *De Fin.*

3.31). The sage, then, does not err (DL 7.21; Cicero *Acad.* 2.66; Sextus *M* 9.133; Stobaeus *Ecl.* II.111.18). Epictetus identifies Stoic ethics of belief with the core elements of Stoic ethics generally: "Make beautiful your moral purpose, eradicate worthless and false opinions" (*Diss.* 3.1.43). A criterion for sorting truths from falsities is, then, clearly necessary.

The Stoics held that, as opposed to the Epicureans, not all sensations are true. Some are true, and some are false. Of the true impressions, there is a special subset that Zeno of Citium termed *kataleptic impressions*. Diogenes Laertius reports that Stoics defined them as follows:

> The presentation meant is that which comes from a real object, agrees with that object, and has been stamped, imprinted and pressed seal-fashion on the soul, as would not be the case if it came from an unreal object.
>
> (DL 7.51)

From this, the initial account of kataleptic impressions is that an impression is a kataleptic impression (KI) if and only if:

a it is caused by an existing object,
b it accurately represents the object that caused it,
c it is an impression stamped on the mind, and
d it is such that it could not have been produced by anything other than its source object

Clause a) ensures that KIs have the proper relation to what they are about, so cases wherein some impression can be caused by something other than its content will not count as being properly kataleptic. So, for example, a door painted like the courtyard behind it will give one a true impression of the courtyard, but it is not caused by the courtyard.[11] Clause b) ensures that KIs are *true*, and clause c) ensures that the impressions are not only given to us, but are *available* to our awareness with the relevant content. Zeno analogizes the impression to that of signet ring in wax (DL 7.45). Chrysippus later expands on the model (on the thought that wax can hold only one impression at a time, whereas our minds can have many and compare them). He names the impressions *alterations* to our souls that can result in memories and can accumulate to knowledge (Sextus *M* 7.230; Cicero *Acad.* 2.20).

The key to KIs is in being able to ensure that a), the causal requirement, and b) the truth requirement, are satisfied in a way that the subject can be sure of both. To this challenge, the Stoic response is to emphasize clause d). In fact, on Cicero's testimony, clause d) was a later addition, as the Academic skeptic Arcesilaus challenged to Zeno: "what would happen if a true impression was just like a false one?" Zeno replied that, "no impression would be [kataleptic] if one that came from what is was such that there could be one just like it from what is not" (Ac 2.77). With clause d), the Stoic theory of KIs has a modal element—that *it is not possible* for a KI to be like a false impression. Consequently, clause d) shows that both clauses a) and b) are both guaranteed by unique features of a KI. In short, there are no KIs that are indistinguishable from false or improperly caused impressions.

The Stoics were explicit that KIs were shared between ignorance and knowledge—one could have a KI and still not have knowledge, but one can have knowledge only if one assents only to KIs. This is because knowledge emerges from the inter-relations between many kataleptic impressions (Ac 1.42). Zeno demonstrates the ascent from opinion to knowledge with an image. An *impression* is like one's open hand, *assent* is like one's hand lightly closed, and a *kataleptic impression* is like a tight fist. Finally, *knowledge* is one's

other hand tightly grasping the fist (*Acad.* 2.145).[12] Such knowledge is reserved only for sages, but we all have access to KIs, and we may make progress toward wisdom by doing our best to use them as our criterion and assenting only to them.

Skeptical critique of the Stoic criterion was targeted primarily at what I've termed the distinguishability requirement, clause d) of the definition of kataleptic impressions. The challenge of skeptical critique was simply whether this condition could be met by any impression. Given Zeno's stipulation that kataleptic impressions not only *are not* but *cannot* be like false impressions, the skeptical challenges were generally formulated as *indistinguishability* cases.

The question is whether, for any impression that lives up to conditions a), b), and c) for KIs, there could be an identical but false impression. This is the core of skeptical indistinguishability challenges. They come in four stages of dialectical development. The first stage of indistinguishability challenge is simply the fact that many things are practically indistinguishable. Two eggs, for example, are indistinguishable. Twins, too, are very hard to tell apart (*Acad.* 2.56–8; *M* 7.409). The implication is that all we would need, for any object, is its different twin-style counterpart (which only needs to be *possible*, since this is a matter of a *modal* requirement) to yield possible, but indistinguishable, impressions of the objects in question.

To answer the counterparts challenge, the Stoics turn to their metaphysics. On the Stoic notion of identity, all things, insofar as they are not identical to other things, have properties that make them unique. If objects are different, even eggs and twins, they must have *some difference,* even if minute, that constitute their non-identity (Plutarch *Comm. Not.* 1077c; *Acad.* 2.56).[13]

The second stage of development for the skeptical critique is that the Academics concede this Stoic point about distinctive properties of individual things, but they challenge whether these differences are accessible to subjects in any realistic sense. The objects may be different, but that does not guarantee that they will make distinctive impressions (*Acad.* 2.84). Isn't it at least *possible* that the differences between two objects are so minimal, they simply will not register different sense impressions?[14]

The Stoic reply at this stage is that those who have sharpened their perceptual capacities can tell even miniscule differences. Generally, experience and attention will develop one's capacities to detect small differences. Parents of twins, for example, have no difficulty telling them apart (*Acad.* 2.20). It is important that this Stoic reply depends on a concession—that it is possible to be given a KI but not know it is a KI. So, with the twins' case, a stranger and a parent could have the same impressions of one twin or the other, but only the parent has the capacity to determine what the distinctive differences are.

The third stage of skeptical critique depends on the implicit concession that being given a KI does not guarantee that one rightly believes one has it. Moreover, this possibility allows for another—to believe one has a KI when one does not. For the first case, consider the story of Admetus, Alcestis, and Heracles. Alcestis, Admetus' wife, died. Heracles went to the underworld and brought her back. Admetus, when presented with his wife, does not believe that the woman before him is Alcestis, because he thinks she is dead. By hypothesis, Admetus has the requisite perceptual skills to know when he has a KI of Alcestis and he actually has such an impression, yet he mistakenly believes that this is not Alcestis (Sextus *M* 7.254). In the second case, consider the story of Heracles and his children. Heracles is cursed by Hera to have a vision, while playing with his children, that he is being attacked. He fights back and slays those who clearly appear to be his attackers, but they, in fact, were his own children. Surely, he would not kill someone unless he thought *for sure* they were not his children. But he did (Sextus *M* 7.405; *Acad*. 2.89).[15]

In the Alcestis example, the point is to show that it is possible to have what is, by hypothesis, a KI and not recognize it as such. In the Heracles's children example, the point is to show that it is possible to think one has a KI when one, in fact, does not. The skeptics argued that if KIs are to play the role of criteria, these gaps must be closed. If these gaps are not closed, then we must have a separate criterion for whether we are properly identifying KIs or not; and if this is the case, a vicious regress of criteria for criteria looms.

The Stoic reply is to add a qualification to the use of KIs. In the Alcestis example, it is because Admetus had a false belief that the doubted he had a KI. So, given the other beliefs, the KI could not play its proper role.[16] KIs, so long as our minds are not cluttered with false commitments, are proper criteria.

> [T]he apprehensive presentation is not the criterion of truth unconditionally, but only when it has no obstacle. For in this latter case, it being plainly evident and striking lays hold of us, almost by the hair, as they say, and drags us off to assent. (*M* 7.257)

KIs, so long as we have not incorrectly pre-judged the situation, will have a force and vitality that will force our assent and its coordinate action (Cicero *Acad.* 2.38; Plutarch *Adv. Col.* 1121e, 122c; Sextus *M* 7.405–7).

The problem, as the skeptics point out in the fourth stage of development of their critique, is that the two qualifications—no obstacles and force and vivacity—are too easily confused with rationalization, intellectual haste, and deception. The case with Heracles and his children should make this abundantly clear. This problem is magnified by the fact that Stoicism is supposed to be a *revisionary* philosophical program. Stoicism requires that we change our view of many of the most important things. This means that every one of the Stoic *paradoxa*, even if supported by KIs and excellent argument, have widespread obstacles (Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 4 and Plutarch *de Communibus Notitiis adversus Stoicos* 1059d). The only way one could come to the position of recognizing these KIs as true guides would be to have eliminated the false beliefs that block them, but this is precisely what the criterion was supposed to be doing already. It seems, then, that in order to use this criterion properly, one must have already successfully deployed it (Sextus *M* 7.25 and 7.445; Cicero *Acad.* 1.44).

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A lingering question is what one should do if neither the Stoic nor Epicurean criteria survive scrutiny. In fact, given the problem of the criterion, a more general question arises: what should one do if no criteria pass scrutiny? The skeptics held that when one does not have reasons that provide knowledge, one should suspend judgment. But how does the skeptic *live* without knowledge or at least belief? It seems that the skeptical challenges, though theoretically unimpeachable, have objectionable practical consequences. Call this the *apraxia* problem for skepticism. The Epicureans joked that skeptics will walk off cliffs (*DND* 4.507, see also *KD* 22), leave rooms through walls instead of doors (*Adv. Col.* 1222E), or walk blithely out into traffic (DL 9.62). The Stoics argued that without conviction, the skeptic would never amount to much (*Acad.* 2.23–4). The apraxia argument is:

1 The skeptic suspends judgment, so does not assent.
2 One can act only if one has assented to something.

So, the skeptic does not act.

It should be noted that even if the *apraxia* argument is sound, it does not entail that skepticism about the criterion is wrong, only that it is inconvenient. But it does show something about *skeptics*—namely that they, insofar as they do act, are either breaking their rule of suspending judgment or are deploying something belief-like to act. The skeptical replies to the *apraxia* argument come in three forms: the radical Academic, the moderate Academic, and the Pyrrhonian.

Arcesilaus represents the radical Academic skeptical reply to the *apraxia* argument. In essence, he denies Premise 2—appearances can guide our action independently of our beliefs, because our reactions to them arise involuntarily (DL 4.86).[17] So we may instinctively avoid stepping off cliffs, and we don't need *beliefs* about them to do so. When one suspends judgment about everything, one can still regulate choice and avoidance in terms of the reasonable [*eulogon*] reaction to appearances (*M* 7.158). All that is necessary for action is an impression of something appropriate and an impulse in light of that impression—this, Arcesilaus holds, is perfectly consistent with universal suspension of judgment (*Adv. Col.* 1122D; see also DL 4.32). So, though Arcesilaus held he does not know anything (even including whether he knows nothing), he nevertheless can act (*Acad.* 1.45).

The modest Academic reply to the *apraxia* argument is given later by Carneades. Though no impression can give us knowledge or guarantee truth, some impressions provide more *plausible* [*pithanōn, probabile*] or truth-like [*phainomenē alēthēs, verisimile*] information than others (*M* 7.173; *Acad.* 2.99). "Both our judgments and our actions are, in fact, guided by what applies for the most part" (*M* 7.175). Cicero analogizes the situation with navigating by the stars. On the one hand, there is the Cynosure (the Little Dipper), which are dimmer stars and difficult to find, but they are perfectly reliable; and on the other hand, the Septentriones (the Big Dipper), which are not totally reliable, but bright and easy to find. Most of the time, we cannot find the Cynosure, but the Septentriones are there for us. The modest Academic line is to say that following the plausible impressions is like navigating by the brighter, but less reliable stars when the Cynosure is not available. One has something to go on, but it is not guaranteed to be knowledge (*Acad.* 2.66). This amounts, then, to qualifying the restriction on assent, so the modest Academic rejects the first premise of the *apraxia* argument—there is a kind of acceptance between not being moved at all and assenting as though one knows. Cicero distinguishes these two types of assent in terms of restraining from dogmatic commitment and accepting or rejecting a "yes" or "no" proposal on the basis of what appears persuasive (*Acad.* 2.104; see also *PH* 1.230). Persuasive impressions and the modest acceptances can still be wrong, even ones that seem very plausible (*PH* 1.227; *M* 7.175). Moreover, plausible impressions not only can be true, but they can, with more investigation, become progressively more worthy of our (modest) assent. For example, a coil of rope on the floor, in low light, may look like a snake, so it seems one should avoid it. But one can later put better light on it or poke it with a stick. One can determine if the impressions are stable over various samplings, and if they survive testing. Carneades terms the ones that do *irreversible* [*aperispastou*] and *tested* [*diexōdeumenē*] (*M* 7.181). And so it goes for many other matters—whether to get married, or go on a trip, for example—we have initial impressions of how things plausibly seem to us, and as we collect more impressions, some things continue to be plausible after being seen from a variety of viewpoints and after being tested, and some things don't survive that scrutiny (*Acad.* 2.109).[18] So the Academic will have views (even philosophical views), but they will be representations only of what, given the variety of impressions available now, seems most plausible (*Acad.* 2.7–9; *DND* 1.11–12; *Tusc.* 5.10–11).

The Pyrrhonist route, represented best by Sextus Empiricus, takes the modest Academic answer to be simply a new form of dogmatism (*PH* 1.234).[19] Instead, the Pyrrhonist lives in terms of the appearances—the skeptical challenges leave how things appear in place, and they move us to assent involuntarily. So the Pyrrhonist assents, for example, to the claim that honey seems sweet to taste, but assents to *no more* (*ou mallon*) than that (*PH* 1.188).[20] And Pyrrhonists live in light of a fourfold of widespread reactions to appearances. They follow the guidances of nature and those of the passions, as they drink when thirsty, eat when hungry. They are constrained by the local laws and customs, and they are instructed in the arts—they behave as those around us do (*PH* 1.17 and 23–24).[21] The Pyrrhonist, as a result of the skeptical critiques, revises almost none of the common life to which the Epicureans and Stoics had proposed radical alternatives.

Notes

1 See Chisholm 1974 and Cling 2014 for statements of the general form of the problem of the criterion from a contemporary epistemological perspective. Hankinson's (1995: Ch. 9) overview of the ancient versions of the problem shows that the skeptics ran the argument in a variety of forms.
2 See also Robitzsch's chapter on "Epicureans on What There Is."
3 It is worth noting that skeptical challenges were posed to both feelings (Sextus *M* 11.73) and basic grasps (Sextus *M* 8.334) independently as criteria. However, given their dependence on sensation's verity, the prime target for skeptical critique is that of sensation. See Fine 2011 for an account of the connection between skeptical challenges to basic grasps and those to perceptions. Shorey 1901, Rist 1972, Irwin 1989, Gerson 2003, Asmis 2009, and Fine 2011 observe that the content relation, then, makes Epicurus's ethics dependent on his empiricism.
4 Gerson holds that Epicurus' argument here is a form of "naturalized epistemology" starting with the observation that knowledge is manifest and then looking to explain it in terms of the fundamental naturalistic program. Therefore, it "circumvents skepticism" (2003: 71). Vogt (2016: 147) rightly notes that the Epicurean argument from parity shows that all perceptions are true, then, is *necessary for* the anti-skeptical view, not one that is *a result of them*. Lévy terms the result of this argument an "absurd confidence in sensation" (2009: 453).
5 See DeWitt 1943: 99; Rist 1972:20; and Gerson 2009: 95 for versions of this reconstruction.
6 See Striker 1983, who argues that Aenesidemus' modes target both naïve and representational realisms.
7 Fowler 1984 argues that this is an appropriately modest anti-skeptical result. However, Gerson 2009: 95 holds that this strategy "trivializes" the Epicurean criterion. See also Striker 1996a: 85 and Irwin 1989: 151 for similar criticisms.
8 Plutarch argues that this means that the Epicureans have evacuated AST, since it seems that *close views* are accurate, others not so (*Adv. Col*. 1121c). See Asmis 2009: 978, who replies that this objection does not index the truths to the circumstances accordingly. A result is that by indexing all sensations, the Epicurean position is not so far off from the relativistic forms of Aenesideman Pyrronism (as argued by Bett 2000).
9 Bolyard glosses the insight and costs of this result: "sensation is infallible insofar as it accurately reports the state of the images informing it" (2006: 164). See also Rist 1972: 15–16; Vogt 2016: 151 for reconstructions of the argument. O'Keefe captures the dialectical miss: "Responding to sceptical worries about the reliability of the senses by asserting, 'Yes, but all sensations exist' seems radically beside the point" (2010: 100).
10 Versions of the evacuation problem have been instances of vicious circularity in Epicurean epistemology – that the physical theory underwrites the empiricism, which is supposed to underwrite the physical theory. See: Taylor 1980: 121; Bolyard 2006: 165.
11 See Plato's worries about eye-tricking paintings and proper causal pathways for successful cognition at *Republic* X.602d. This is why Zeno's requirement is so important—that for the impression to be *properly of* a reality, it must have the proper causal history including that thing, else it seems it fails to properly be *of* the thing it purports to be about.
12 Diogenes Laertius reports that the Stoics held knowledge to be "either as unerring apprehension or as a habit or state in which reception of presentations cannot be shaken by argument" (DL 7.47). Consequently, knowledge is *irrefutable.*

13 Michael Frede notes that another possibility of this concession is that what is distinctive of KIs is their causal histories only (1983: 85). That would mean that the Stoic program was a form of *epistemic externalism* – that the distinctive features of positive epistemic status for beliefs need not be accessible to the subjects who possess them. Externalism is an effective anti-skeptical strategy, but one of its costs is that it foregoes the project of providing *criteria* for truth, which are supposed to be accessible to subjects. See Reed 2002 for a third option—a *disjunctivist* reading of kataleptic impressions.
14 This argument can be presented in Soritical fashion. There can be small enough differences between presentations for even the most sensitive judge to miss. But these micro-level differences, if they make no difference in individual instances, may still yield corporate difference (Sextus *M* 7.416, Cicero *Acad.* 2.47–9). See Thorsrud 2009: 72 for a reconstruction.
15 Frede 1983: 91–2 holds that the force of these skeptical challenges is weakened by the fact that these are not problems for KIs as criteria, but for determining when one is in the right state of mind to use these criteria.
16 R.J. Hankinson calls this qualification a "strategic retreat" for the Stoics 2003: 73. KIs still are *infallibile*, but they nevertheless are *defeasible* as criteria. This is a significant qualification on the epistemic role for KIs. Julia Annas 1980: 90 holds that, further, given this qualification, KIs are not independent criteria for truth, but are part of a coherent set of right reasons that function jointly as a holistic criterion.
17 See Ioppolo 2018: 43–4 for an interpretation of Arcesilaus' line of thought as one developed dialectically out of the Stoic program of *kathekon* and *oikeiōsis.*
18 See Thorsrud 2018: 58; 2010: 70; and 2009: 78; and Striker 2010: 200 for versions of Carneadean probabilism and its program for philosophical research.
19 See Striker 1996b: 136 and 2010: 197; Brunschwig 2009: 472; Hankinson 2010: 106; Perin 2010: 90; and Brennan and Roberts 2018: 128 for discussions of the contrast between Pyrrhonians and modest Academics on assent and action.
20 The scope of suspension for the Pyrrhonist is a point of debate. There are those who interpret the Pyrrhonists as radical skeptics, suspending all beliefs (exemplary is Burnyeat 1988). Others hold that the Pyrrhonist suspends judgments with regard to theoretical matters, but leaves ordinary beliefs alone (exemplary is Frede 1988). Crucial to both is that whatever suspensions the Pyrrhonist makes, it is for the sake of achieving *atraxia*, or placidity of mind. So, even if the Pyrrhonist is a radical skeptic in the same frame as the Arcesilean model, they do so for a result beyond their skeptical doubts. In this regard, the Pyrrhonist program is more a form of life.
21 For an overview of the extent and depth of these commitments for Pyrrhonists and later skeptics more generally, see Ribeiro 2009.

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PART IV

First Principles, Nature, and Teleology

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17
EPICUREANS ON WHAT THERE IS

Jan Maximilian Robitzsch

Introduction

Human beings are. Computers are. Unicorns are. And since one could easily continue the list, it seems at first glance that the answer to the question of what things are is quite simple: *everything* is. Likewise, then, for the Epicureans, lest their theory were to lead to some very implausible results, everything must be—at least in some sense of the term. However, in what sense precisely? How can different things be said to exist? This chapter will discuss the ontological schema that the Epicureans develop in their writings, that is, how they categorize and account for the existence of different things.

The chapter has three sections. The first section will discuss body and void as the only natures that exist in themselves and that make up all other entities. The second section will explain how body and void combine to form the bodies of our phenomenal experience. Finally, the third and last section will examine how at first glance problematic entities like events, time, the mind, thoughts, and the gods can be fitted into the Epicurean ontological schema.

Body and Void

Epicureans are well-known for their empiricism, that is, for their endorsement of the claim that all knowledge derives from the senses (Hahmann 2015 with references to older literature). It is then hardly surprising that their approach to the question of what there is is also first and foremost shaped by sense experience. Accordingly, the first answer to the question that the Epicureans give is very simple: body [*sōma*] is (*Ep. Hdt.* 39). Epicurus considers this starting point so evident that there is no further need to elaborate on it. After all, a key assumption of Epicureanism is an anti-skeptical approach to the world, according to which all information derived from the senses is true and reliable (frr. 248, 250, 251, and 253 Us.). We can and do experience bodies in the phenomenal world around us with our senses: tables are bodies, chairs are bodies, and, in fact, we ourselves as human beings are bodies. Accordingly, these things, the Epicureans claim, must exist.

However, after identifying body as what Epicurus calls one of the "natures that exist in themselves [*kath' heautas ... phuseis*]" (*Ep. Hdt.* 68) and the later Epicurean Lucretius refers to as entities "that exist in itself [*per se ... esse*]" (*DRN* I.466), the Epicureans also

quickly note that bodies move, which helps establish the existence of the second nature of the world: the void (*kenon; Ep. Hdt.* 40). Void cannot be observed with the five senses like body, since it is not a body; we can only experience things that are bodily and material. However, we can deduce the existence of the void by means of an inference; we can confirm its existence by asserting its compatibility with what we observe, or rather, on the basis of our observations of the world, we can deduce its necessary existence. In other words, the void must exist in order for there to be movement. The technical names for the epistemological procedures involved in making this inference are witnessing [*epimaturēsis*] and non-counter-witnessing [*ouk antimaturēsis*]. While the details about their exact functioning are a bit murky (for a recent discussion, see Bakker 2016: 15–31), for our purposes it is merely important to note the following: the starting point for Epicurean philosophy is sense perception and sense perception is quickly supplemented by rational inferences that develop the full implications of the observations.

After noting that bodies and the void exist, the Epicureans point out that there is no further, third nature. The two arguments offered here are very simple (*DRN* I.432–448). First, according to the Epicureans, the main difference between body and void is that the former is tangible, that is, susceptible to touch, whereas the latter is not. One could thus ask whether a potential third nature is tangible. If it is, the Epicureans maintain that it would also be body. If, by contrast, it is not, they argue that the third nature must be void. And so, because a third nature would reduce to body or void, it would not be an independent nature. Second, a further difference between body and void is that the former can act on something and be acted on by something else, whereas the latter cannot. Again, one can ask whether a potential third nature can act on something and be acted on. If it can, it must be body on the Epicurean view; if it cannot, it must be void. So, we reach the same conclusion: there is no independent third nature. The all (*to holon*; that is, everything that exists) therefore consists only of body and void on the Epicurean view, which gives us a second, more complete answer to the question of what there is: body and void.

One can quickly elaborate on this answer by adding that the all, on the Epicurean view, is immutable (*Ep. Hdt.* 39; Brunschwig 2006) as well as infinitely extended. Lucretius offers a series of arguments for the latter claim (*DRN* I.951–1051). To discuss all of these in detail would exceed the scope of this chapter. However, the most famous of these arguments concerns the following thought experiment. Imagine someone at what is presumed to be the edge of the universe is throwing a spear toward the edge. Will the spear really hit a target and bounce back or will it keep flying or at least potentially be able to continue soaring through space? The Epicureans maintain that the latter option is far more plausible than the former and so conclude that there is no real edge or end to the all. In fact, for the Epicureans, this image is compatible with the idea that our world is not the only one (*Ep. Hdt.* 45; *Ep. Pyth.* 89; *DRN* II.1023–1089). There is an infinite number of other worlds beyond the world we live in, and all of these worlds make up the all. Some of these worlds are very much like our own, others very different; yet, again, all of these worlds are made up out of the two natures that we distinguished above, namely, bodies and void, of both of which there is an infinite amount on the Epicurean view.

Next, we can elaborate further on the above answer by specifying what the Epicureans mean by body and void. Let us begin with body. So far, when discussing body, we understood it to refer to the bodies that are the objects of our phenomenal experience. After all, these bodies were the starting point of Epicurean theory. However, the Epicureans also make clear that there are not only bodies at the phenomenological level, but that there are in fact many smaller bodies that cannot be perceived by the senses. In particular, Lucretius offers a series of analogies that are supposed to help us grasp the existence of these smaller

bodies (*DRN* I.265–328). Wind, for example, must consist of tiny particles, Lucretius insists, if it is to have an effect on bodily things such as the sea that is roused up during a storm. Likewise, while we cannot see the water in wet clothing, the process of drying makes it clear that wet clothes have invisible particles in them that are dissipated in the process of drying. And, in general, we can, for instance, according to Lucretius, observe gradual attrition when drops hollow a stone or repeated use wears out the pavement on which we walk. All of this indicates that phenomenal bodies must be made up out of smaller particles.

We should quickly note at this point that for the Lucretian observations to be true, the Epicureans must endorse the (at the time) widely shared principles that nothing can be created out of nothing and that nothing can be destroyed into nothing (*Ep. Hdt.* 38–39*; DRN* I.149–264). These principles in this context have the function of attributing regularity to nature and assuring that there must be some permanent foundation underlying all processes of change that we observe in the phenomenal world (Brown 1984: 74–5). For the Epicureans, this permanent foundation underlying all processes of change consists precisely of the small particles that Lucretius argues for and that the Epicureans also call atoms.

In adopting an atomic theory, the Epicureans follow the Presocratic philosopher Democritus who, together with Leucippus, is considered the founding father of atomism.[1] Yet while Cicero quips that Epicurus was right to the extent that he followed Democritus, but completely unoriginal to the extent that he deviated from him (*De Fin.* I.21; see also *DND* I.73), this is not what the extant evidence suggests. It would require a book-length discussion to point out all the differences in detail (and, in fact, this was precisely the topic of Karl Marx', admittedly rather idiosyncratic, doctoral thesis: *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature).* However, below it will at times be useful to return to some key differences between the Democritean and Epicurean conceptions in order to highlight certain features of Epicurean theory.

On the Epicurean view, atoms are eternal, indestructible, solid, single, indivisible, and immutable, which in Lucretius is backed up by a series of arguments (*DRN* I.483–634 with comments *ad locum* in Brown 1984). In addition, they are said to have 1) size, 2) shape, 3) weight, and 4) move at a constant speed, being naturally inclined to move downwards. In regard to size [*megethos*], Epicurus remarks that there is a certain limit to the size of atoms (*Ep. Hdt.* 55–56); atoms cannot be observed by sight and so there are no atoms above the visible threshold. Likewise, Epicurus claims that atoms do not come in an infinite number of sizes, because such variability would not be "useful" (*chrēsimon; Ep. Hdt.* 56) in explaining the qualities of things.

In regard to shape [*schēma*], Epicurus likewise claims that while atoms can have many shapes, the number of different shapes is not infinite (*Ep. Hdt.* 42; see also DRN II.333–568). The reason for this is that Epicurus maintains that certain atomic shapes would be too fragile to persist (fr. 270 Us.), which contrasts with Democritus' assertion that there is an infinite number of atomic shapes (DK 68A37). The observation in regard to atomic fragility is also important insofar as atoms in Greek are literally un-divided [*a-tomos*] entities, where undividedness supports the idea that atoms have a certain solidity and indestructibility. Be this as it may, the Epicureans insist that while atoms are undivided, they can be conceptually further divided, even if such a division is not physically possible (*Ep. Hdt.* 56–59; *DRN* I.599–634 and II.481–499). This gives rise to the notoriously difficult theory of minima or minimal parts in Epicureanism, a theory that at least in part seems to have developed in response to certain criticisms Aristotle raised in regard to Democritus' atomism and its implications for the understanding of movement (Furley 1967: 3–158; Verde 2013).

The last two features, the weight [*baros*] and movement of atoms, finally, can be discussed together, since the Epicureans also treat them together (see especially *DRN* II.62–332). Weight, which Democritus did not ascribe to atoms, for the Epicureans, is a cause of the natural tendency of atoms to move downwards (Konstan 1979: 408–17). The natural downward movement, by contrast, poses a puzzle insofar as the Epicurean universe is infinite and one wonders where "down" is in an absolute space (see also the discussion of the terms "up" and "down" at *Ep. Hdt.* 60). Regardless, the Epicureans acknowledge not only that all atoms are constantly in motion, but also that they all move at the same speed and at certain points may deviate from their path, that is, swerve (as a noun: Greek *parenklisis* as well as Latin *clinamen, inclinatio*, or *declinatio*). The details of this kind of movement and exactly how it factors into Epicurean theory is a matter of scholarly debate. The situation is complicated by the fact that the Epicurean technical term for the swerve is not extant in any text by the school's founder, Epicurus, but only conserved in later Epicurean authors such as Lucretius (*DRN* II.216–293) and Diogenes of Oenoanda (fr. 54.III.6–7 Smith), and in non-Epicurean authors such as Cicero and Plutarch (fr. 280 Us.).

In contrast to atoms, the second nature of Epicurean theory, void, is characterized through its non-resistance [*eixis*] to body (scholium on *Ep. Hdt.* 43; Sextus Empiricus, *M* X.222). Beyond this, the Epicureans do not offer a positive characterization, although they also use alternative designations to talk about the void, such as intangible nature [*anaphēs phusis*], place [*topos*], and space [*chōra*] (*Ep. Hdt.* 40; *M* X.2; fr. 271 Usener). These different characterizations gave rise to different readings of the void in Epicureanism (Sedley 1982; Konstan 2013). In Democritus, void is usually understood to be a complement to matter. The idea here is that the world essentially consists of an alternating web of two entities, thing and no-thing (*to den/ to mēden,* see DK 68B156), just like the ones and zeros in a binary code of a digital computer. If one assumes that the Epicureans are closely following Democritus, then the Epicurean void is also understood in this way as merely the complement or the second element in an ontological schema that consists of two natures. This is the traditional understanding of the Epicurean conception of the void. David Konstan's recent observation that the term "void" in Epicurus is always used in the singular, whereas "bodies" is used in the plural, adds an interesting nuance to this reading. Rather than being a series of zeros and ones, to go back to the binary metaphor, the relationship between void and bodies would thus have to be understood as the relationship between one big zero and a multitude of ones. As already indicated, there is also an alternative reading of the void. On this reading, the void is understood as a kind of geometrical space into which entities can be placed. This means that the void is not merely a complement of matter, and it would suggest that the Epicureans are actively developing the Democritean conception of the void into something different and new.

Phenomenological Objects

Up to this point, we have discussed the starting point of the Epicurean theory and how the Epicureans argue for the existence of two natures that exist in themselves: body and void. Let us next turn to the question of how the two natures combine to create the objects of our everyday experience. In regard to combinations, we should first note that for the Epicureans there are no compounds that consist purely of atoms; all entities on the macroscopic level are compounds of atoms and void (*DRN* I.329–417). Furthermore, all entities on the macroscopic level are compounds of different kinds of atoms,

and not made solely of one kind of atom (*DRN* II.581–599). Finally, not all combinations of atoms are possible (*DRN* II.700–729; see also V.837–854). For instance, there are no chimeras, on the Epicurean view, which has the ethical consequences that all fear of such beings is irrational. After all, such beings do not and cannot exist as entities of the phenomenal world, which underscores the idea that for the Epicureans the study of physics is first and foremost instrumental for ethics (see, for instance, *Ep. Hdt.* 83; *KD* 11–13). (We will return to the question of how chimeras as thoughts exist in the next section.)

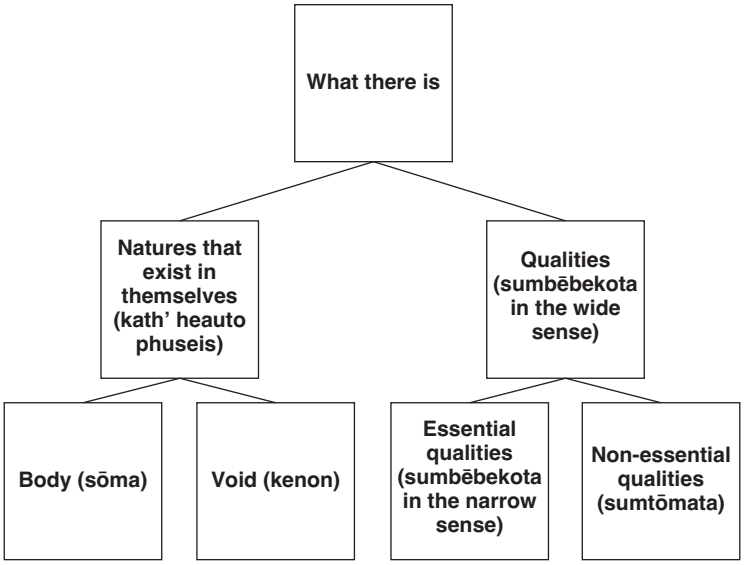
As we saw above, Epicurean atoms have only three different properties: size, shape, and weight. Accordingly, one might wonder how color, sweetness, and other qualities on the phenomenal level can be explained on the Epicurean view. The best foil for understanding the Epicurean position in this regard is again Democritus, one of whose most famous pronouncements is: "By convention sweet and by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention cold, by convention color; but in reality atoms and void" (DK 68B9; trans. C.C.W. Taylor). This statement is typically understood as endorsing a skeptical conclusion about the reality of the phenomenal world: all that really exists are atoms and their features, whereas phenomenal properties are just "*nomoi*" (by convention), where "*nomoi*" does not mean conventional in the sense of "arbitrary," but conventional in the sense of "not a real thing," that is, not real in the way that atoms and void are real. Since a variant of the pronouncement in Plutarch also describes compounds (*sunkriseis;* sg. *sunkrisis*), that is, aggregates of atoms and void, as entities that are merely "*nomoi*" (Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1110e) and the Epicureans are known for their ringing endorsement of sense experience, it is hardly surprising that they reject this consequence of the Democritean view: compounds *are* real entities on the Epicurean view.[2] However, this does not mean that at least in some cases the Epicureans do not endorse the Democritean position that macroscopic, phenomenal qualities can be explained in reference to microscopic ones. An example of such an explanation is, for instance, the sweetness of honey and the bitterness of wormwood, which are explained not by the sweetness or bitterness of the atoms of honey or wormwood (recall that the atoms themselves only have size, shape, and weight), but rather by the roundness of the shape of their atoms (*DRN* I.398–407). Likewise, because atoms are not themselves colored, the color of objects on the phenomenal level is explained by the arrangement and position of the atoms in the entity that corresponds to a certain color (*DRN* II.730–841). Yet Alexander of Aphrodisias, in his treaty on mixing, observes that while for Democritus a mixture of wine and water is a mosaic of water and wine atoms that retains its individual qualities, for the Epicureans a mixture completely dissolves into water-producing and wine-producing atoms; a mixture may have qualities that are different from the qualities of the individual water-producing and wine-producing atoms (fr. 290 Us.). Accordingly, while it seems that on the Epicurean view some phenomenal qualities can be explained in terms of a reductionist model, that is, higher level qualities (for instance, sweetness) map onto or reduce to lower qualities (atomic shape or arrangement), the discussion in Alexander at least suggests that a reduction is not always straightforward. More importantly, however, no Epicurean text mentions, for instance, the relationship between such qualities as beauty and atoms or that between justice and atoms. And it has also been argued, in regard to controversial extant passages from Epicurus' *On Nature* dealing with the phenomena of responsibility and voluntariness, that the

Epicureans may be not committed to a reductionist theory at all (for some discussion, see Sedley 1983; Sedley 1988; Furley 1993; O'Keefe 1997).

Whatever their exact view on reductionism was, the Epicureans distinguish between two kinds of qualities or properties in order to characterize existing things further: essential and non-essential qualities [*sumbebēkota* and *sumptōmata*] (*Ep. Hdt.* 68–71; see also Sextus Empiricus, *M* X.221–223). Lucretius names heaviness in rocks, heat in fire, liquidity in water, tangibility in matter, and intangibility in void as examples of the former (which he calls "*coniucta*"; *DRN* I.453–454), while, for him, "slavery, poverty and wealth, freedom, war, concord, and all other things whose coming and going does not impair the essential nature of a thing" (*DRN* I.455–457; trans. by M. F. Smith) are examples of the latter (which he calls "*eventa*"). Note first that the list makes clear that essential properties are found at the micro- and macrolevel, whereas the non-essential qualities are only found at the macrolevel. As a result, the analysis of microscopic atoms and macroscopic, that is, phenomenal, objects will differ on the Epicurean view insofar as the latter will be made up of a much larger set of qualities than the former. A further consequence of this is that the analysis of phenomenal objects does not have to be effectuated in terms of their atoms, but rather can also be done by conceiving an entity as a bundle of properties, some of which will be essential, while others are non-essential. Such an analysis is interesting insofar as it starkly contrasts with the Aristotelian view, advanced, for instance, in the *Categories,* according to which objects at the phenomenal level are substances (that is, things that can exist by themselves), in which qualities inhere. According to such a model, what substance is, however, remains somewhat mysterious. In opting for a kind of bundle theory, the Epicureans get rid of the potentially mysterious notion of a substance. However, by distinguishing between essential and non-essential qualities, they also at the same time risk not being able to explain how change over time can occur (Betegh 2006: 279–82; see also the discussion in Warren 2001). After all, if a given thing is defined as a bundle of, say, three properties, but these qualities are lost and replaced by different ones, it is not quite clear how the object with three properties can still be said to be identical to itself. The introduction of essential qualities or properties at least somewhat mitigates this problem.

That said, it is very difficult to fully specify what exactly essential qualities of objects are, on the Epicurean view. Sure, fire is hot, but what other qualities does fire need to possess to be fire? As Gabor Betegh speculates, the answer to this question probably involves the much-debated Epicurean preconceptions (*prolēpseis,* sg. *prolēpsis*; for a recent discussion, see Tsouna 2016), that is, kinds of concepts that are gained through sense experience and that allow perceivers to classify a thing as the thing in question. However, the precise scope of the Epicurean theory of preconceptions is somewhat unclear. And in classifying different objects, it makes a difference whether, for instance, a preconception is of conjoined terms such as "a good person" or of simple ones such as "person." Depending on which classification we apply as a basis, we will reach a different evaluation. Put differently, it may be clear that goodness is an essential quality of a good person, but it is not so clear that it is also an essential quality of a person.

At this point, we have fully explicated the Epicurean ontological schema. It can be summarized by the following diagram (see also Sextus Empiricus, *M* X.220–221), noting that the neat division is probably not quite Epicurean:



Time, Events, the Mind, Thoughts, and the Gods

After having laid out the Epicurean ontological schema in the previous sections, this section will turn to some case studies. It will explain how the Epicureans can explain the existence of entities like time, events, the mind, thoughts, and the gods. The purpose of this discussion is to elaborate on the comments about the Epicurean ontological schema that were advanced up to this point as well as to point to some developments and limitations of the Epicurean theory.

First, time. The discussion that Epicurus himself offers at *Letter to Herodotus* 72–73 is notoriously cryptic, and neither Lucretius' brief mention of it nor an extant fragment from Epicurus' *On Nature* that also deals with time helps to clarify matters much (*DRN* I.459–463; Cantarella and Arrighetti 1972). However, the second century BCE Epicurean Demetrius of Laconia, as reported by Sextus Empiricus, offers the interesting suggestion that time is a non-essential quality of a non-essential quality [*sumptōma sumptōmatōn*]:

> Hence the things which time accompanies are non-essential qualities—I mean day, night, hour, presence and absence of feelings, motions and rests. For day and night are non-essential qualities of the surrounding air: day becomes its attribute because of its illumination from the sun, while night supervenes because of its deprivation of illumination from the sun. And the hour, being a part either of day or of night, is also a non-essential quality of the air just as day and night are. And coextensive with every day, night and hour is time. […] As for presence and absence of feelings, these are either pains or pleasures, and hence they are not substances, but non-essential qualities of those who feel pleasant or painful—and not timeless non-essential qualities. In addition, motion and likewise rest are also, as we have already established [immediately prior to the passage quoted, JMR], non-essential qualities of bodies and not timeless: for the speed and slowness of motion, and likewise the greater and smaller amount of rest, we measure with time.
>
> (*M* X.224–227; Trans. by A. Long and D. Sedley, modified = text 7D)

In the background of this discussion are, at least in part, Aristotle's ideas on time in the *Physics*, according to which time is understood as a measure of movement. If one translates this idea back into the Epicurean ontological schema, then movement can most easily be understood as a non-essential quality of phenomenal bodies, as the last sentence of the passage just quoted makes clear. After all, phenomenal bodies can also be at rest (which again atoms cannot). Since, furthermore, time is also dependent on movement (as Aristotle claims), Demetrius posits that this dependence is also that of a non-essential quality (that is, there could be movement without time); therefore, the classification of time as *sumptoma sumptōmatōn* or non-essential quality of a non-essential quality follows.

As interesting as the proposal is, however, there are several reasons to be suspicious of it. First, there is the absence of other examples of such *sumptomata sumptōmatōn* in any extant Epicurean text, which makes it unlikely that such a quality was already conceived of by Epicurus. Second, the question of the exact ontological status of time more likely was at best a subsidiary question for the school's founder in light of his overarching ethical goals, making the question of the exact ontological nature of time the ideal breeding ground for the views of later Epicureans, such as Demetrius. And finally, the idea of "qualities of qualities" on the whole seems rather awkward and needlessly complex (why not also third-order qualities?), upsetting the simplicity of what is otherwise a very simple ontological schema. Accordingly, it seems more prudent to consider this classification of time as a later development in the Epicurean school, pointing to the fact that in the context of the school's history, the discussion of time is an example of doctrinal development and innovation.

This brings us to the ontological status of events, which are explicitly dealt with by Lucretius:

> Again, when people assert that the rape of Tyndareus' daughter [= Helen] and the subjugation of the people of Troy "exist," beware of the possibility of being trapped by them into an acknowledgement that these exist in themselves [*per se esse*], simply because those generations of human beings, of whom they were non-essential qualities [*eventa*], have been swept away beyond recall by ages past. For it could be said that any action [*actum*] is a non-essential quality [*eventum*] of the whole earth or of the actual regions in which it occurred. Moreover, if there had been no material substance, and no place and space in which all things happen, the beauty of Tydareus' daughter would never have fanned into flame the fire of passion smoldering deep in Phrygian Alexander's heart, so kindling the blazing strife of savage war; nor would the wooden horse, unknown to the Trojans, have discharged from its pregnant womb under cover of night the Greeks who filled Pergama with flames. From this you may clearly see that all deeds without exception have, unlike matter, no independent existence [*per se esse*], and cannot be said in the same sense as void; rather you may with justification term them non-essential qualities [*eventa*] of matter, or of space in which all things happen.
>
> (*DRN* I.464–481; Trans. by M.F. Smith, modified)

What is interesting about this passage is that Lucretius here argues against an unnamed opponent who tries to trick the reader into admitting non-Epicurean ideas. Lucretius insists against the opponent that events like the rape of Helen or, to use a more modern example, the Philadelphia Eagles' win of Super Bowl LII, do not need to exist independently (there does not need to be a separate metaphysics of events that acknowledges the existence of events as separate entities); instead, such events should be understood as non-essential qualities, either of matter or of space. In other words, this proposal continues to specify the Epicurean ontological schema, explaining how events can be made sense of on the

Epicurean view, but it leaves open to some degree what exactly events are dependent on. Again, then, just as in the case of time in Demetrius, the discussion might thus constitute a later development, either by Epicurus himself, who reacted to critics, by Lucretius, or by some other Epicurean author. In contrast to Demetrius, however, Lucretius is certainly more careful in accepting extensive metaphysical commitments.

Third and fourth, we turn to the discussion of thoughts and the mind in Epicureanism and how these can be said to exist. As should be abundantly clear at this point, the Epicureans are materialists. Accordingly, the mental for them is made up of a special type of atom (*Ep. Hdt.* 63–68; *DRN* III.9–416; see also Recipi 2008). But what does this mean for thoughts? We already remarked above that chimeras do not exist in the world on the Epicurean view, since the study of physics shows that certain atomic combinations cannot possibly exist. Nevertheless, even these things must exist as thoughts because we are meaningfully able to talk about them. The Epicurean idea for their existence is quite simply this: they are the combinations of different images that have been superimposed. For instance, a unicorn is a combination of the images of a horse and a single horn. To spell this out further, it will be helpful to review some basic features of Epicurean epistemology (*Ep. Hdt.* 46–53; *DRN* IV).

For the Epicureans, all objects in the phenomenal world emit a constant stream of likenesses or images [*eidōla*] of themselves that are very fine, but nevertheless material, and that travel through the world and are picked up by the sense organs of perceivers. This leaves a trace in the perceivers, just like the impression in a wax-tablet that makes it possible for perceivers to experience and classify an object as the object in question. Now, in order to conjure up again a previously perceived object in the mind, Epicurean perceivers, in absence of the object itself, make use of the incalculably large number of images of the same object that are swirling around them, ready to be taken into the mind at any time. These images enter the mind when a perceiver thinks of a given thing. Thoughts, then, are also material images; the Epicureans do not allow for the existence of a third entity of thoughts that is separate from body and void. In contrast to the Stoics, who also endorse a materialist philosophy, the Epicureans do not allow that there can be a separate incorporeal class of existing things (beside the void) that contains the meanings of things (which the Stoics call *lekta*).

Finally, the existence of gods. At *Letter to Menoeceus* 123–124, it is clearly asserted that the gods exist, but the nature of their existence is far from clear, giving rise to one of the most controversial debates in the scholarship on Epicurean philosophy (for a recent overview of the scholarship, see Veres 2017). The space allotted here does not allow for details, and my intention is merely to point out that on either of the two predominant understandings of the Epicurean gods, the gods can be easily accommodated by the Epicurean ontological schema. According to the first, the realist, reading, the gods are said to exist as real entities. So, on this reading the gods can be made sense of as real-world anthropomorphic compounds of atoms and void. By contrast, according to the second, the idealist, reading, the gods are said to be mere thought constructs. On this reading, the gods exist as material images precisely in the way that was just discussed. The discussion of the precise ontological nature of the gods, however, is also interesting and fits into the narrative of this section of the chapter insofar as it may, as Máté Veres has argued, not have been fully worked out. This could explain the current scholarly controversy and at the same time further support an idea that has already been highlighted above: although the Epicureans develop a sophisticated ontological schema that is capable of classifying all sorts of entities, their prime interest is not metaphysics or physics for their own sake, but rather these topics only insofar as they contribute to the freedom from bodily pain and mental distress [*aponia* and *ataraxia*], which is the highest ethical goal in life on the Epicurean view. Such an approach is compatible with competing explanations, at least as far as these explanations are equivalent in explanatory power.

Conclusion

This chapter laid out the Epicurean ontological schema. The first section described body and void as the only two natures that exist in themselves. Together, body and void make up the all, which, from an Epicurean perspective, consists of an infinite number of worlds. The second section of the chapter then discussed in detail how bodies, or, more precisely, the atomic particles into which they can be decomposed, and void combine to make up the bodies of everyday phenomenal experience. For the Epicureans, not all combinations of atoms and void are possible, ruling out the existence of chimeras. Furthermore, while there are some examples of macro-level qualities that are reducible to qualities of the atoms, it is unclear whether such a reduction is possible for all qualities. Complicating matters further is the observation that phenomenal bodies are said to have both non-essential and essential properties, whereas atoms only have certain essential properties on the Epicurean view, namely, weight, shape, and size. Finally, in the last section of the chapter, the existence of time, events, the mind, thoughts, and the gods was discussed. This discussion supplemented the previous discussion by highlighting developments and limitations of the Epicurean theory. While perhaps not all of the entities enumerated were originally in the Epicureans' mind as they were developing their ontological schema, they can be easily accommodated: either as additional entities that exist (as in the case of the mind, thoughts, and the gods—leaving open whether the gods are not ultimately thoughts as the idealist reading claims) or as kinds of properties that belong to things in the phenomenal world (as in the case of events and time—the latter of which some later Epicureans may even have classified as a second-order property).[3]

Notes

1 See this volume's chapter by Maso on "Epicureans, Earlier Atomists, and Cyrenaics."
2 In a papyrus discovered among the remains of the Herculaneum library, the last school head of the Epicurean school to have probably known Epicurus personally, Polystratus, also seems to maintain against an unnamed opponent that the conventionality of entities does not imply its non-existence. However, given the lacunas of the papyrus, the exact argument and its import are hard to ascertain.
3 I would like to thank Andree Hahmann for comments and discussion. Thanks also to Kelly Arenson for the invitation to contribute to this volume and the suggestions for improvement.

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18

EPICUREANS ON TELEOLOGY AND FREEDOM

Attila Németh

Epicurus and his followers laboriously criticized those philosophers who believed in a purposefully created and arranged cosmos administered by a divinity. According to them, a blessed and immortal god experiences no troubles himself and causes none for anyone else (cf. *KD* 1); hence, such a being cannot be involved in the tiresome creation or administration of our world. The Epicureans consequently liberated their disciples from the superstitious fear of the gods, not by denying their existence, but by denying their status as active cosmological principles. The Epicureans' material explanation of the universe, formulated in opposition to the theists, nonetheless threatened us with subjection to deterministic material laws. If our cosmos is deprived of a divine providence, being the accidental outcome of atoms purposelessly moving in the void, is it not the case that every phenomenon in the world, including ourselves and our actions, is causally determined by the underlying atomic interactions? In such a case, no room remains for freedom, even for the gods.

In formulating his anti-teleological theory, Epicurus came up with a multitude of arguments and innovative ideas, including some that explain how it is possible to preserve a genuine notion of freedom within the general framework of his materialism. In this chapter, I focus first on the philosophical background (Part I) against which Epicurus (Part II) and his followers (Part III) developed their anti-teleological arguments, before turning to the questions and tensions involved in Epicurus' conception of freedom (Part IV).

Part I

Teleological explanations or accounts that recognize some kind of purpose in the natural world go back as far as the very beginnings of Western philosophy.[1] The term "teleology" originates from the Greek words *telos* [end, purpose] and *logos* [account, explanation]; it hence conveys the idea of an explanation of something by the goal, end, or purpose it intrinsically serves. The term is applied today to philosophical theories which contend that natural entities or cosmic phenomena have inherent, end-directed structures or purposes as a result of intelligent or natural design. Although teleological factors seem frequently to have shaped the agenda of the early Greek thinkers—for example, Anaxagoras' cosmic intelligence, mind [*nous*] which creates worlds from pre-existing stocks of matter, or Empedocles' divine forces, Love and Strife, taking their turns at rearranging our cosmos

according to their contradictory purposes—we do not have strong evidence that divine causation or natural design ever became a subject for detailed teleological arguments before Socrates or Aristotle, respectively (Sedley 2007: 79–92).

The pages of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* present Socrates as the first systematic teleological thinker (*Mem.* I.4.2–10). In order to positively change his interlocutor Aristodemus' attitude to religious practices—Xenophon tells us that he held that the gods are not in need of his worship, since they are above human affairs—Socrates catalogues the gifts of the gods to humans (such natural endowments as religious sensibility, intelligence, non-seasonal sex etc.), arguing on the strength of these for the existence of a demiurge: a beneficent, divine craftsman who made the world. Later in the book, he also develops an explicitly anthropocentric teleology by describing our favorably-orchestrated relation to the animal kingdom and the environment, both of which exist for man's sake (*Mem.* IV 3.5–15). Socrates hence comes across as having formulated the first versions of several familiar teleological arguments, which were subsequently classified as the Argument from Design (also referred to as Intelligent Design, hence ID): that is, arguments that deduce the existence of a providential god from the evidence of rational design in the natural world.[2] Socrates' formulation is emphatically non-scientific: he believes that true piety consists in admiring the outcomes of divine creation and expressing our gratitude by religious devotion instead of speculating about the possible material causes of such rational divine activity.

Socrates' motives for defending creationism have also been viewed as an attack on the early atomists' competing model, which emphasized the creative powers of accident (Sedley 2017, pp. 86, 90, 134–5). Leucippus and Democritus thought that there are infinitely many atoms hurtling in infinite void, and every now and then a large but finite number of atoms spontaneously separate out from the rest and form a vortex, which in turn creates an entire cosmos. Given infinite time, space and atoms, they held that it is not only a possibility but a necessity that there are infinitely many *kosmoi* generated in this fashion, including an infinite number that are identical to our own. And although the early atomists believed in the existence of gods, they did not, similarly to Aristodemus' opinion, think of them as creators.[3]

Plato, developing Socrates' teleological account in his cosmology, put forward a likely account of divine creation in one of his latest works, the *Timaeus-Critias* (Scolnicov 2017). Timaeus, the main speaker of his eponymous dialogue, describes an intrinsically good divine craftsman, the Demiurge, who is the cause of our cosmos' existence, having because of his goodness rearranged a pre-existing material disorder in the best possible way.[4] He modelled our cosmos on the eternal Form of the genus Animal to reflect the intelligible realm in the ruling motions of the world-soul of a single spherical living being, our world, which is inhabited by less pure rational souls, us, who are capable of reincarnation in mortal bodies in the perceptible realm of becoming. It has been debated since the time of Plato's own students whether Plato, accordingly, believed in an asymmetrical universe which had a beginning but no end, or whether Timaeus' creationist story was intended as an allegorical mythos of an eternal universe, cast in the chronological form of a narrative.

Aristotle, Plato's most eminent pupil, understood him in the former sense. Although he agreed that a divine being is the fundamental explanatory principle of the apparently purposive organisms in the universe, he did not think that the teleological structures of these organisms were ever created. Aristotle conceived of teleological or final causes as immanent in nature itself, as part of a natural design existing from all eternity. Such an intrinsic teleology is local but not global: Aristotle's teleological explanations account for certain features of the natural world, but they do not explain the cosmos as a whole. God, or the Unmoved Mover, could not have created these teleological structures, since he must himself

be involved in the best possible activity, contemplation. He is therefore detached from administering the universe, let alone from having ever created it. Yet, the Unmoved Mover produces motion by becoming an object of desire, a motivating factor in Aristotle's cosmology. The entire natural world strives to imitate god's eternal actuality—humans by philosophical contemplation (*NE* X 8); all animals (humans included) and plants by procreation (*De An*. II 4, *Politics* I 2); and even the non-animate elements by their natural cycles (*Meteorologica* I 9). God, as the *telos* or the final cause of the natural world himself, is nonetheless unmoved, being self-absorbed in his pure self-contemplation.

One upshot of this brief overview is that we can clearly see that Greek accounts of teleology before Epicurus had always been connected in one way or another to theology, to the study of the nature of God. It is thus appropriate to characterize Epicurus and his followers' arguments against creationism as having been formulated in opposition to teleology, that is: as anti-teleological. It is still, however, sometimes unclear whether the Epicureans are arguing against certain earlier thinkers, or rather against their contemporaries the Stoics, who were the first to offer systematic, formal arguments in favor of divine craftsmanship. The reason behind this lack of clarity is not only that the Epicureans do not always name their opponents, but also that ancient Greek creationist accounts of reality share certain fundamental principles, making it harder to identify which specific tenets, or whose tenets, they may have had in mind in any particular context of argument. The Stoics also thought of their material cosmos both as animated by an active divine principle and as a living being; yet their cosmos was clearly symmetrical, having a beginning and end. Since it is the best possible of worlds, perfect and complete, and one finite world could not occupy all the infinite available time, it keeps recurring endlessly, identical each time to all previous and subsequent worlds.[5] Although this idea of identical worlds may remind us of the atomists, it is radically different because it excludes the simultaneous existence of identical *kosmoi*, and includes an immanent deity who governs the actually existing cosmos. Both of these things are inconceivable on Epicurus' exclusively material account of the universe, to which now we will turn.

Part II

Epicurus' central reason for wanting to refute teleology can be best described as ethical. The major objective of his philosophy was to provide the keys to a pain-free [*a-ponia*], undisturbed [*a-taraxia*] human condition, which can compare with a life of the gods, which divine blessedness he characterized in somewhat and similarly negative terms as *not* being troubled by or *not* causing trouble to others (cf. *KD* 1). In order to secure the grounds for such an ideal condition, he wished to remove the two major impediments to attaining such a happy life: the fear of gods and the fear of death. To exclude the former, he had two major arguments against divine teleology on the strength of the available primary evidence: one of which, a), was cosmological, and the other b) conceptual, concerning as it did divine blessedness. Let us look at the cosmological argument first.

a) According to Epicurus, the religious opinions of the many cause great disturbances to their souls, since how they imagine the gods is hugely influenced and contaminated by such mythical portrayals as can be found, for instance, in Homer and Hesiod. These vengeful and often angry images of deities are a common source of distress and fear, making us believe that lightning is the work of Zeus, that an earthquake is that of Poseidon, or that the effects of love are brought about by Aphrodite. But these misconceived beliefs can be driven out by the light of a proper material account of the nature of things (cf. e.g. Lucretius *DRN* I 62–101). If our cosmos is conceived of as the accidental outcome of atomic

collisions into which everything eventually dissolves, then it does not require additional divine forces; consequently, if gods are driven out of our world, there is no reason to fear them. If they are not involved in creating or controlling the circumstances of our lives, they cannot punish us either after we die as some eschatological myths threateningly claimed. As well, if our body and soul are completely destroyed in death, falling apart into their atomic constituents, there is no subject left who could undergo after-life punishment.

Epicurus' argument for the infinite number of worlds provides implicit evidence against divine teleology; it becomes explicit in a further extended form by one of his followers, Lucretius. Epicurus supported the simultaneous existence of infinite worlds by arguing that the totality [*to pan*] of things is unlimited. For what is limited has an extremity, and an extremity is evident in contrast to something else; consequently, the totality of things cannot have an extremity, otherwise there would be something outside it, and it would not be a totality; therefore, it has no limit and since it has no limit, it must be unlimited and infinite (*Ep. Hdt*. 41). Consequently, the infinitely many atoms (cf. Lucretius *DRN* II 522–68) can travel any distance in void. This naturally includes those atoms which are suitable [*epitédeia spermata*] for constituting a cosmos. Given that atoms are limited in their kinds, but each kind, according to the theory, is unlimited in its numbers, there are an infinite number of "suitable seeds" able to constitute a cosmos; these thus cannot have been exhausted in one world, set within its own boundaries, or on any finite number of differentiated worlds, whether these are like ours, or entirely different. There must therefore be infinitely many worlds (*Ep. Hdt*. 45).

This conclusion excludes and thus implicitly refutes both the possibility of a single, anthropocentric, teleologically-arranged cosmos on either the Platonic or the later Stoic model, and that of a finite Aristotelian universe. Lucretius extended the conclusion of the argument with the additional point that it would be inconceivable how any such divine leader could have powers adequate to control the infinite universe (*DRN* II 1052–1104). This seems partly to rest on the assumption (Cicero, *DND* I 26–28) that an anthropomorphic divinity could not perceive and run the universe if it is infinitely extended, because perception necessarily occurs in bodily extremities through which one perceives what is outside oneself.

The argument for an infinite number of worlds does not however exclude the possibility of postulating an infinite number of gods directing them individually, an idea that would not have been absurd for the Epicureans given their principle of "distributive equality" [*isonomia*]. In their opinion (Cicero, *DND* I 50) the power of the infinite [*vis infinitatis*] is so enormous that in the sum of things everything has its exact match and counterpart. Accordingly, if there is a great number of mortals, there must be a similarly great number of immortals as well. And considering that there must be infinitely many mortals in an infinite number of worlds, there must be infinitely many immortals as well. In view of Epicurus' desire to remove the fear of gods, it is however reasonable that he did not extend his theory towards this direction.

b) In order to strengthen the implications of his cosmological account and to demonstrate that the gods do not care about us and thus do not harm us even while we are alive, Epicurus also addressed teleology head on from the conceptual perspective of divine blessedness:

> (1) Moreover, when it comes to meteorological phenomena, one must believe that movements, turnings, eclipses, risings, settings, and related phenomena occur without any [god] helping out and ordaining or being about to ordain [things], and at the same time [gods] having complete blessedness and indestructibility; for

> troubles and concerns and anger and gratitude are not consistent with blessedness, but these things involve weakness and fear and dependence on one's neighbors. (2) Nor again can they [i.e. the gods?] be in possession of blessedness if they [the gods] are at the same time balls of fire [i.e. celestial bodies] and adopt these movements by deliberate choice; rather, we must preserve the complete dignity implied in all the terms applied to such conceptions, so that we do not generate from these terms opinions inconsistent with their dignity; otherwise, the inconsistency itself will produce the greatest disturbance in our souls. Hence, one must hold the opinion that it is owing to the original inclusion of these compounds [the heavenly bodies] in the generation of the cosmos that this regularly recurring cycle too is produced.
>
> (*Ep. Hdt.* 76–77)[6]

In this extract, Epicurus provides two arguments against teleology. The first, in section 1), claims that meteorological phenomena must occur naturally, without any divine assistance, since the activity of maintaining and running a cosmos involves trouble, concern, anger and favor, all of which have their origin in weakness, fear and dependence on neighbors. These attributes are incompatible with our conceptions of blessedness and imperishability; therefore, no god or group of gods could be involved in ordaining the workings of the cosmos, since they are blessed and indestructible.

The second argument, in section 2), states that swirling balls of fire—that is, celestial bodies—cannot be blessed and undertake their motions by deliberate choice simultaneously, since that would be inconsistent with the dignity implied in our notion of blessedness (also cf. *Ep. Hdt*. 81). If our conception of dignity did not exclude the tiresome administration of the cosmos, that would, consequently, produce the greatest disturbance in our souls by conceding the possibility that the gods might significantly intervene in our lives. Nonetheless, dignity is incompatible with world administration: therefore, the regular cycles of meteorological phenomena must depend on the materials included in the accidental generation of the cosmos.

Both arguments operate with the claim that certain mental states are inconsistent with our conception of blessedness. Who is "we" in this context? If "we" are only the Epicureans, then these arguments would certainly have no force against their opponents. Therefore, if we assume that Epicurus wanted to influence an audience wider than just his own, it must be taken that he is talking about a naturally-formed conception of divine blessedness shared by everyone. Epicurus' claim in his letter to Menoeceus (*Ep. Men*. 123) that god is an indestructible and blessed animal in harmony with the general and commonly held conception of god confirms this implied assumption.

It is harder, however, to determine what in fact this commonly held conception of the divine might contain. Divine blessedness is constantly characterized in negative terms in Epicurus' extant writings—in most cases in a pair with their indestructibility. As we have seen, divine blessedness is inconsistent with certain burdensome activities that cause mental disturbance—trouble (cf. *KD* 1), concern, anger—or with some others such as favor or gratitude.[7] What blessedness for the gods might positively consist of is described in a non-specific, brief imperative: "believe of him everything which is able to preserve his blessedness and indestructibility" (*Ep. Men*. 123).

If we wish to find a positive characterization of what blessedness was for Epicurus, we have to turn to his description of what it consists in for the wise, whose primary aim is a blessed life based on imitating the divine. [8] In the *Letter to Menoeceus*, we read that the Epicurean goal of the blessed life is the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from

disturbance (*ataraxia*), the start and endpoint of which is pleasure (*Ep. Men*. 128). This is, however, certainly not a universally accepted opinion, but Epicurus' central ethical idea—the reason why his philosophy has been considered hedonistic[9]. Consequently, it cannot lay claim to universal acknowledgement.

Epicurus' ancient critics (notably the Sceptics: cf. Sextus Emp. IX 3–4) were quick to point out not only that the positive characteristics of blessedness pose an unresolved problem in his writings, but also that it is foolish to suppose that you can know the attributes (blessed, indestructible) of something unless you really *know* the thing in question. You cannot know, for example, what "neighing" is unless you have a conception of a horse, which you can only acquire by coming into contact with a neighing horse (cf. Sextus Emp. IX 3. 173–4). But how does one get direct experience of god? Even if we grant that gods are conceivable, Sextus argues that it is not clear that they exist, since if they have made an impression on us in themselves, then the dogmatic philosophers would agree as to what they are, what form they have, and where they dwell (cf. Sextus Emp. IX 3. 6). The irresoluble debate between the schools evidently means that the gods themselves are unclear and in need of proof; therefore, even the Epicurean claim to an innate and supposedly universal conception of the gods that implies blessedness and indestructibility (Cicero *DND* I. 43–56) is untenable. Consequently, Epicurus' primary arguments against teleology based on his concept of divine blessedness turn out to be rock solid only for those who have already converted to his teachings.[10]

We can, nevertheless, perhaps save Epicurus from the sceptics' criticism by reading his arguments in combination with Cicero's testimony on the principle of charity—that is, by interpreting his ideas in the most rational and strongest possible way. After all, Epicurus' cosmological arguments for the infinitely many worlds had already liberated the gods from their commonly-held creationist and cosmological responsibilities; consequently, Cicero's Epicurean protagonist Velleius (*DND* I 52–53) can correctly conclude that the gods must be "free from duty" [*nullis occupationibus est inplicatus, nulla opera molitur*], which habit he then can successfully integrate into his conception of divine blessedness. However, this characterization, which nicely follows from Epicurus' cosmology and is certainly incompatible with a list of things mentioned in Epicurus' arguments against teleology, is still a negative description. Thus, the basic discrepancy pointed out by the sceptics remains: several different conceptions of divine blessedness exist—the Stoics' idea, for example, that blessedness is exhibited in the rational order which pervades the entire cosmos—and in order to accept Epicurus' notion of it, we need to subscribe to his atomism in the first place.

We may add however that Epicurus might intentionally have avoided positively characterizing divine blessedness in order not to put forward a dogmatist claim, which might bar him from claiming that a universally shared concept of god exists. Instead, he simply appealed to the *consensus omnium*: the agreement of everyone (*DND* I 44) that the gods are blessed and indestructible.

Part III

Epicurus' teachings lived on and flourished in Republican Rome under the stylus of such prominent and prolific followers as Lucretius and Philodemus. In book V of his grand and beautiful didactic poem in six books, *On the Nature of Things*, Lucretius developed a number of specific arguments against creationism, depending on writings of Epicurus that today are only available in fragments (cf. the two copies of the remnants of *On Nature* XI, *PHerc*. 1149/993 and *PHerc*. 1010, on which much of *DRN* V depended).[11] After the initial praise of Epicurus in the proem, Lucretius sets out his task, which is to demonstrate

the formation of the cosmos and civilization. However, before explaining the mortality of the cosmos, he wishes to prove that it is not made of divine matter or created and run by any divinities. His first point concerns the connection between mind and matter (*DRN* V 110–145):

> In actuality it is not possible to find
> In every single body an intelligence and mind—127
> …
> But since within our bodies we see there is set aside 138
> A certain area where spirit and the mind abide,
> And where they grow, all the more reason that we must not claim 140
> That they can thrive outside the flesh, without a living frame,
> In rotting clumps of dirt, or conflagrations of the sun,
> Or water, or the towering reaches of heaven—therefore none
> Of these bodies is endowed with the divine sensation, seeing
> None of these can be animated into a living being.[12] 145

As intelligence cannot be present in any and every kind of matter (cf. also Cicero's testimony, *DND* I 23), so it must be in the case of divine sensation: it cannot just be operative in any medium, e.g. in rocks or fiery celestial bodies, but it requires its own appropriate frame. For the same functional and material reason, Lucretius finds it inconceivable that the holy abodes of the gods could be inside our cosmos: in order for them to remain effective, the different, tenuous nature of the Epicurean deities, who appear exclusively to the human mind but are unable to come in contact with anything we can touch, must have a home unlike ours—in the spaces between worlds [*intermundia*]—in accordance with the fine essence of their nature (*DRN* V 146–55). Lucretius, therefore, also implicitly rules out the possibility that our cosmos could have been created by a divine being, given the limited physical interaction deities can have with our world.

Next, in order to ridicule the idea of anthropocentric design, Lucretius poses a series of challenges to his opponents by raising a number of questions (*DRN* V 156–86):

Q1 What profit could the gods gain from our gratitude for their providence?
Q2 Why did they desire to change their lifestyle at so late a stage?
Q3 What harm would it have been to us if we had not been created?
Q4 Where did they get a model for the creation of the world and a preconception for men?
Q5 How did they know the powers of matter?

Who are the targets of these questions? Since Lucretius names only three of his Presocratic opponents in his entire poem (*DRN* I, 635–920), the identification of his adversaries in book V has become a sort of battlefield (cf. Sedley 1998 pp. 73–5).

In general, Epicurus' own opponents in his philosophical polemics were the Presocratics and Plato. The Stoics, his contemporaries, became prominent later on, so it was left to his successors to engage with them. Cicero's Epicurean protagonist Velleius criticizes Platonic and Stoic theology side by side (cf. *DND* I 18–23), and Philodemus attacked both earlier thinkers and his near contemporaries, the Peripatetics and Stoics. But Lucretius, somewhat oddly, remained faithful not only to the ideas but even to the contents and targets of Epicurus' writings. With these questions he most likely targeted Plato's ideas in the *Timaeus*.[13] As we have seen in section I, Plato's Demiurge modelled his cosmos on an eternal paradigm, which contains all animal species, humans included. For the Epicureans, however,

there cannot be a concept of anything before we have come into contact with that thing and learned about it through experience: hence Q4 and Q5, which questions also assume—legitimately even on Plato's own anthropomorphizing account of the Demiurge—that the gods are subject to the same sort of epistemological constraints as humans are. On the literal interpretation of Timaeus' creationist myth—that is, that our cosmos was created in time—Lucretius could reasonably ask what sufficient reason there was for creation to occur at a certain point in time, given the infinite past time available (Q2).[14] Since Plato's dialogue—as we can gather from the evidence of Lucretius' contemporary Antiochus of Ascalon[15]—was read as anthropocentric by the end of the fourth century in the Academy under Epicurus' contemporary Polemo, we can assume that Lucretius is again referring to the *Timaeus* when he mocks the exchange of divine providence for human gratitude (Q1), an idea which was incompatible with the Epicureans' conception of divine blessedness. Invoking Lucretius' famous symmetry argument (*DRN* III 843–861)—just as we were not harmed by our past nonexistence in all the centuries before we were born, we will not be harmed in our future state of nonexistence after we die—Q3 draws a parallel symmetry between our pre-natal and post mortem non-existences.[16] Just as we could not have had any desires before we were born, we will not have any after we die, since in both cases there is no existing subject who could have those desires; and such a subject, as non-existent, cannot thus suffer any harm. Hence, Plato's conception that god by his nature wanted to make everything as good as possible is an object of indifference to an Epicurean, who does not believe in any pre-natal or post mortem existence of the soul.

Lucretius continues to demolish the idea of a divine providence by turning the evidence for the supposedly beneficially and anthropocentrically-arranged nature of the universe against its proponents, the advocates of Intelligent Design (ID). When Lucretius looks around, he says, he sees many obvious flaws in the cosmos—to mention a few of his abundant examples (*DRN* V 187–234): the difficulties that mountains and forests full of wild beasts impose, or the vast sea that keeps the shores of lands far apart, or extreme weather conditions which make a large part of the land uninhabitable to us. Lucretius had already addressed the proponents of ID earlier, in *DRN* IV 823–57, where in the context of explaining sensation and thought he pointed out that the functional character of sense-organs, used as evidence for design, rests on an erroneous analogy with artefacts. While the latter are invented to enhance pre-existing functions for which there is already a natural model, natural organs cannot have been preconceived in a similar way (cf. Q 4–5 above), and their apparent functionality should be attributed to a process of natural selection instead (cf. Sedley 2007 pp. 150–5).

If god or an intelligent creator did not fashion our world, which is instead an accidental yet—given infinite time—inevitable outcome of the atomic motions of matter, where does that leave human agency? At what cost did Epicurus and the Epicureans free us from religious superstitions? Is it in our power, for example, to act voluntarily if our body and soul—just like the whole universe—are constituted from, and causally determined by, certain underlying atomic motions that are themselves fixed by their previous interactions? Is freedom, therefore, only an illusion? And what, at all, was Epicurus' conception of freedom?

Part IV

Epicurus famously held that "it would be better to adhere to the lore about the gods than be the slave to fate posited by the natural philosophers" (*Ep. Men.* 134). Fate may be a mistress [*despotis*] for some philosophers, but in Epicurus' opinion the wise man believes a) that

although some things come through unaccountable environmental necessity, and b) that others happen by chance, c) some things most importantly happen because of us (they are *par' hémas*). The results of our actions are free or literally have no master [*a-despoton*] other than us: therefore, they are subject to praise and blame. As a result, Epicurus' conception of freedom seems to have been connected to moral accountability or responsibility. This sort of freedom means that agents themselves, and not something else, are the causes of their actions. But what sort of traits did Epicurus attribute to our agency in order that it be considered the kind of cause of any action to which moral responsibility can be ascribed?

In modern discussions, one concept of moral responsibility turns often on the agent's ability to do otherwise even in the same set of circumstances. But Epicurus did not conceive of it in this way.[17] Instead, he thought that an agent is morally responsible and can be regarded as the cause of an action a) if he is not forced to bring it about; b) if his action is based on his desire or impulse to carry it out, and c) if he can act accordingly; and finally d) if his action rests on his own beliefs—with b) thus actually stemming from d). This last criterion is the most fundamental to Epicurus' ethical conception, because without the ability to change our beliefs, e.g. as a result of philosophical training, we could not eventually alter or moderate some of our primary desires in harmony with what is appropriate to our rational development, and hence act virtuously. Without this we could not, in turn, achieve the most pleasurable human condition. Thus, the foundation of Epicurus' conception of freedom is the idea that an agent is responsible for his beliefs because

> as one proceeds in age it is not by necessity that this sort of thing [i.e. the sort of occurrent, rational mental state which can include certain sets of beliefs] is produced in one, but as a result of oneself and as a result of the cause out of oneself that one is able to exert some power.
>
> (*PHerc.* 1191)[18]

Consequently, if we have the capacity to shape our beliefs as grownup rational animals and, based on our beliefs, have some desires that lead us to act in certain ways, we can be held accountable for what we do under no compulsion, and praised or blamed for our actions and moral character.

But how could Epicurus explain the real causal efficacy of an agent within the framework of his atomistic theory? Is it not the case that, even if we are the cause of certain actions based on our beliefs which are carried out freely without any external compulsion in harmony with our desires, we are still determined internally by the atomic motions of our constituent matter to such an extent that theoretically what we are going to believe and consequently do is predictable? If what we do is necessitated by the internal causal atomic framework of our constituent matter, can we properly be praised or blamed for our actions? Can we consider ourselves free if we are internally determined? This worry arises in any theory of causal determinism, according to which all events are determined by prior causes: taking any event E, given the causal laws that govern the universe—whatever they are—and the prior state of the world before E occurred, E was inevitable. Epicurus did not think that such a causally determined understanding of the world would be compatible with his conception of freedom: hence, in order to solve the above worry, he introduced the atomic swerve. In theory, atoms swerve randomly, that is to say, at no determined place or time, inserting an element of indeterminacy on the atomic level into the material universe. But how exactly this random atomic swerve which breaks the internal causal continuity of matter is meant to provide for our freedom on the phenomenal level of our world is unclear.

Since we have no surviving evidence for the swerve from Epicurus' pen,[19] we have to rely on the ancient reception of the theory within his school and among his opponents. Our richest account is Lucretius' bifunctional adaptation of the atomic swerve: (S1) as the principle of collisions, and (S2) as the third cause for atomic motion.[20] (S1) If atoms did not swerve randomly from the trajectories of their motions, eventually all would fall downwards like drops of rain through deep void, and neither any collision nor a blow could occur among them given that atoms move with equal speed in void (cf. *DRN* II 225–242); consequently, nature would produce nothing (*DRN* II 216–250). Furthermore, (S2) if the atoms did not swerve, there would be a closed causal nexus on the atomic level and there would be no free volition [*libera voluntas*]; but we see that animals in our experience evidently have this *libera voluntas*, so it cannot be the case that the atoms do not swerve (*DRN* II 251–293). Therefore, the atoms swerve, and the atomic level of the material world is not causally determined.

The idea of the atomic swerve also appears in Cicero's *On Fate* (*De Fat.* 18, 22, 24, 46–8) with the further complexity that in Cicero's presentation Epicurus introduced it not only to exclude causal determinism, but also the universal applicability of future truth, since he held that the two mutually entailed each other.[21] A famous example of truth-to-necessity type argument was the Lazy argument (*argos logos*). If you accept the Principle of Bivalence (T[p] v F[p]) and fall sick, then

1 *Either* it is true and has always been true that you are going to recover from your sickness *or* it is false and has always been false that you are going to recover.
2 If either of the two propositions has been true from all eternity, it is certain.
3 If it is certain now, it is also necessary now, because the past is immutable.
4 Since there is no point deliberating about what is necessary, it is pointless for you to call the doctor, if your present actions cannot change the outcome one way or another.

Although these sorts of arguments start out with propositions, Epicurus seems to have made the mistake of switching from propositions to events in his conception of the argument. This shift from propositions to events inserts the idea of the necessity of causal determinism: "it" in 2), carried over to 3) and 4), provides a certain vagueness, which facilitates this fallacious shift from a proposition to an event.

Regardless of Epicurus' precise motivation, his presentation of the random atomic swerve as "an uncaused cause" for atomic motion[22] triggered a huge outburst of criticism in antiquity, where the notion of universal causation was ubiquitous. Already in the second century BCE, the Academic sceptic Carneades objected to the Epicureans that they could have defended their case—that a certain voluntary motion of the mind is possible—by pointing out that our volition has no external antecedent causes (*De Fat.* 24–5). Just as when the atoms fall constantly downwards in empty space because of their weight and the fact that the void is unable to lend them any support, similarly—the objection goes—voluntary motions of the mind are natural and not determined by something else. It is in the nature of the mind that it has the capacity to exert some power in harmony with its volitions. But if we think of Lucretius' argument for the swerve in (S2), Carneades' objection seems to miss the mark: Lucretius argues for the existence of the swerve as a third type of atomic motion based on the evident voluntary capacity of the mind, but his analogical reasoning does not identify the two, since that would make our volitions random. Lucretius could have replied to Carneades that, just as it is in our nature to act voluntarily, so it is in the nature of atoms to swerve their motion away from their established trajectories. The stake for the Epicureans was not whether or not the mind has a natural voluntary motion,

but how such a motion might reasonably be accommodated within an atomist framework. Epicurus' solution seems to have been a material indeterminism, in which the random atomic swerve excludes a pre-determined atomic cause for all the physical states of the universe, thus carving some space out for real mental causation or causal efficacy. How precisely the atomic swerve was supposed to secure this causal efficacy of the self is even now still highly contested.[23] It is, nevertheless, clear that the Epicureans thought of all rational beings, human and divine alike, as free.[24]

Notes

1 At least, if we take Philoponus' report (*In Ar. De anima* 86.29–30) about Thales of Miletus at face value, who supposedly said that "providence (*pronoia*) extends to the extremes and nothing escapes its notice, not even the smallest thing."
2 It is, however, debated if Diogenes of Apollonia put forward the earliest version of the Argument from Design (see Sedley 2007: 75–8).
3 For more on later atomists' views on theology, see Thorsrud's chapter in this volume, "Piety and Theology in the Stoics, Epicureans, and Pyrrhonian Skeptics."
4 Also cf. Theophrastus' *Opinions on Natural Philosophy* (*Physikón Doxai* in: Diels, *Doxographi graeci*, 1879, p. 485, 1–4), who—possibly under the influence of Xenocrates, the third head of Plato's Academy between 339–314 BCE, who started systematizing Plato's philosophy into a body of doctrine—interprets this reason for creation as a connection between the power of God and of the Good.
5 Although not all the Stoics believed in the theory of eternal recurrence: Panaetius is a notable exception (frr. 64 van Straaten = Cicero, *DND* II 118), but both Boethus of Sidon and Diogenes of Babylon seem to have shared his doubts (Philo, *De Aet. Mundi* 76–7). So, indeed, did Zeno of Tarsus (Eus. *PE* 15, 18, 2).
6 Translation from Inwood & Gerson 1994, pp. 16–17, with minor modifications.
7 Which is at odds with a later Epicurean testimony, Philodemus, who in Book 3 of his *On Gods* says that the gods are friends to each other and converse with each other for the pure pleasure of sharing experiences and feelings, see and touch one another and even exchange gifts as a sign of affection.
8 Even in a later source (Cic. *DND* I 52), Velleius', Cicero's Epicurean protagonist's, positive characterization of blessedness ("We [i.e. the followers of Epicurus] place the blessed life in piece of mind and in freedom from all duties"), appears as a normative statement, whose idea of blessedness is not specifically attributed to the divine.
9 For more on this, see Rider's chapter in this volume, "Epicureans on Pleasure, Desire, and Happiness."
10 According to fr. 84 = Philodemus *De Piet.* 225–31 (Obbink) Epicurus spoke of early mankind's formation of the concept of divinity in book 12 of his *On Nature*. According to fr. 41, an anonymous Epicurean treatise (*PHerc*. 1111), Epicurus treated some of the same topics in his *On Piety* and in *On Nature* 12 and 13 (cf. Sedley 1998 p. 121).
11 As convincingly argued in Sedley 1998 Ch. 3–4. In fact, in *DRN* II, 167–183, there is another anti-teleological digression, but in its current form, perhaps due to a lacuna, it does not build up as an argument, but rather as a series of objections treated at greater length in Book V.
12 Translation from Stallings 2007.
13 As Sedley 1998, Ch. 3 argues convincingly.
14 That the Epicureans understood Timaeus' likely account [*eikos logos*] this way, see also the Roman Epicurean Velleius' puzzlement over why the world-builders suddenly appeared on the scene after sleeping through infinite past time. Although he agrees that the concept of time measured by the celestial clock—the motions of the heavenly bodies—had not existed before the creation of the cosmos (*Tim*. 37c6–38c3), he still holds it unthinkable that there should have been some time at which there was no time (*DND* I 21).
15 Cf. Sedley 1998, pp. 75–8.
16 For more on the symmetry argument in Lucretius, see Austin's chapter in this volume, "Epicurus on Sense-Experience and the Fear of Death."
17 As Bobzien 2000 has convincingly argued.

18 Translation from Németh 2017, p. 90.
19 Which does not exclude the possibility of some surviving evidence in the nearly thousand, yet to be opened papyri, cf. Janko 2011.
20 The other two causes being 1) weight, when atoms moving downwards carried by their own weight until there is nothing to stop them, just as race horses surge forward when the gates open in front of them in the hippodrome and 2) impact, when the atoms are impelled by blows, just as a person is forced to move one direction or the other when pushed by the crowd at a horserace (cf. Lucretius *DRN* II 263–83).
21 Cicero makes things more complicated by presenting Epicurus' concern once about the Principle of Bivalence (T[p] v F[p], where T stands for true, F for false and p for proposition) and sometimes about the Law of the Excluded Middle (p v ¬p).
22 At least as interpreted by Cicero in *De Fato* 22.
23 For a fairly comprehensive summary of the different positions by 2005 cf. O'Keefe 2005; for my new, non-reductive physicalist interpretation cf. Németh 2017, Ch. 2.
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NATURE, GOD, AND DETERMINISM IN EARLY STOICISM

Anna Maria Ioppolo

Human and Cosmic Nature

The Stoics said that philosophy is the cultivation of wisdom, that wisdom is knowledge of the divine and human matters and that it has three parts—physics, ethics and logic. Although the tripartition of philosophy had already been adopted by Xenocrates, the Stoics gave it a new meaning. The Stoics conceived of philosophy as a perfectly coherent system in which the individual parts constitute an organic whole. They distinguished philosophy as a unitary system from the philosophical "discourse" related to teaching. Tripartition refers only to philosophical discourse, that is, to the forms in which philosophy, as a science, must be taught and learned. "Physics is practiced whenever we investigate the world and its contents, ethics is our engagement with human life, and logic our engagement with discourse, which they also call dialectic" (Aetius I, *Proem*. 2 [*SVF* II 35] transl. LS). Chrysippus, the third head of the school and the great systematizer of Stoic doctrine, explained that philosophy is "both the correctness of reason and science," or "a particular kind of investigation concerning logos" (*PHerc*. 1020, col. 11–24). Logos is the rational principle that pervades the whole universe, and it is also human reason, but in Greek it also means discourse. Therefore, logic, physics and ethics are the different perspectives from which the study of logos, which constitutes their unique and common object, must be approached. In order to highlight the intrinsic unity of the three parts of philosophical discourse, the Stoics resorted to the various similarities of the egg, of the field and of the human organism, in which the relationship between the discourse as a unitary whole and the parts that make it up was plastically expressed (DL 7.39–40). Yet, the Stoics did not agree on how the teaching should be approached and they had different positions amongst themselves. While Zeno put logic first, physics second, and ethics third, Chrysippus seems to waver diplomatically between Zeno's position and putting physics in last place. He justified this, arguing that young people should study ethics before physics, but that they should first learn some basic principles of physics to understand ethics fully. Chrysippus therefore interpreted Zeno's position as if Zeno had himself placed physics before ethics, only because physics precedes ethics from the didactic point of view. On the one hand, physics occupies second place, because it studies nature on which ethics is based, but, on the other hand, it occupies third place, in that it deals with the discourse on the gods, which is the

most divine. According to Plutarch, a great opponent of the Stoics, Chrysippus contradicted himself on the relationship between the parts of philosophy, prefacing every ethical inquiry with the invocation "Zeus Destiny Providence" and with the statement "that the universe is one and finite, being held together by a single power." And to uphold his claim, he quotes the following words from Chrysippus' work *Physical Theses*: "there is no other, or more appropriate way of approaching the discourse of good and bad things or the virtues or happiness than from the universal Nature and the administration of the world" (Plutarch *Stoic. Rep.* 1035 d, transl. LS).

The intimate connection between physics and ethics is fully justified by the key role that nature plays in the formulation of the ethical goal of the main Stoics, Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus. Zeno's original formulation is to "live in agreement," meaning that man's goal is to live in harmony with his reason. But it seems that Zeno himself, or perhaps Cleanthes, tweaked the formulation later by adding "to nature," believing that this addition made it clear that logos embodies specifically human nature.[1] Be that as it may, this formulation became the standard Stoic definition of the telos. Nonetheless, ancient sources inform us that the concept of nature in Stoicism did not have a univocal meaning. At least this is what we know from the various specifications of the concept attributed by Diogenes Laertius to the heads of the Stoa who succeeded Zeno. While Zeno identified nature with the nature of man, Cleanthes argued that the nature according to which one must live is common nature, and Chrysippus that one must live according to both common and human nature, because human nature is a part of the Nature of the universe. Nature is not only a physical principle giving stability and movement to the cosmos, but above all it is a rational principle. It is also reason, logos, and therefore an active principle that governs the whole universe.

Chrysippus' formulation of the goal is strong evidence for the claim that the concept of nature is the foundation of the close connections between ethics and physics. He asserts that

> to live according to virtue is equivalent to living according to the experience of events that occur by nature … for our natures are parts of the Nature of the whole. Therefore, the goal becomes to live in agreement with nature, i.e. according to one's own nature and that of the universe, doing nothing that is forbidden by the common law, which is right reason, penetrating all things, being the same as Zeus, who is the leader of the administration of things.
>
> (DL 7.87–88)

This means living trying to understand the rationality of the universe and the place of man in it. In this sense, the nature according to which we must live is human nature, which, however, has fully adapted itself to universal Nature. Individual reason therefore reflects the structure and organization of universal Nature, to whose law it conforms. A person who knows this law knows what advantages it gives to them and to the system of the whole. This does not mean that Chrysippus founded ethics on physics or theology, nor that ethics is independent of the results of physical or theological investigation, but more simply, as the evidence also suggests, that it was Chrysippus who developed a picture of the world that was completely coherent: given the absolute unity of the philosophical system, it is impossible to act morally without complying with the law of logos because natural laws are also moral laws.[2]

The Stoics' investigation of the universal natural order and man's relationship with it makes the question of determinism central to appreciating what kind of relationship exists between ethics and physics.

The Stoics started from the assumption that there is a rational order in the universe. God is totally immanent to the matter it informs. The world is conceived as a continuous, finished and unified totality of bodies, without any void within it, situated in an infinite void. The conception at the heart of Stoic physics is that only what is capable of acting and suffering exists, and only what is tangible and corporeal has these capabilities. Zeno identified two principles in the universe, one active [*to poioun*], the other passive [*to paschon*]. The active principle is *pneuma* or breath that is a special combination of air and fire; the passive principle is a combination of earth and water.[3] The passive principle is matter without qualification; the active principle is God, which is always present in the matter. God and matter are therefore the components of the world and are indestructible; they are separable only in thought. In order to become a particular entity, matter needs God and God needs matter to qualify the individual particular entities. The constant combination of God and matter means that the world is, in a sense, equivalent to God.

Zeno believed that the universe was a living being, so he extended the biological notion of the body pervaded by the vital *pneuma* to the universe. Even if Cleanthes first conceived the application of bodily pneuma to the cosmos, which keeps it cohesive through tensional movement, it was Chrysippus who first assumed that "the whole of substance is unified by a breath which pervades it all, and by which the universe is sustained and stabilized and made interactive with itself" (Alex. Aphrod. *De mixt*. 216.14 [*SVF* 2. 473]). As Lapidge has suggested, Chrysippus was the first to realize fully the possibilities of applying the theory of bodily *pneuma* to the universe and worked out the theory of the tensional movement of *pneuma.* [4] *Pneuma* exerts its power of cohesion throughout the universe, making its parts sympathetic, making it a single body and giving coherence and defined properties to individual bodies. It is responsible for the individual objects, the bodies that are interrelated and linked to each other by mutual contact in an interaction that makes them sympathetic (Sextus Empiricus *M* 9.78–80). It is God as designing fire that methodically proceeds towards the creation of the world and contains within itself the seminal reasons according to which everything comes about according to fate. It is therefore the only real agent. As a *pneuma* pervading the whole universe, it takes on various names owing to the alterations of the matter into which it penetrates (Aetius 1. 7, 33 [*SVF* 2.1027]). "God, intelligence, fate, and Zeus are all one, and many other names are applied to him" (DL 7.135–6 [*SVF* 1.102]). It is, therefore, the *pneuma* that impresses a definite state upon matter and also constitutes the causal nexus linking the successive states of matter to each other, and in both these aspects it reveals itself as a spatially and temporally continuous agent (see Sambursky 1959: 36 ss.). This implies that nothing happens without an antecedent cause, and that if things happened without antecedent causes, the continuity of the universe would be destroyed.

Zeno's Theory of Causality and the Definition of Fate

In order to understand Zeno's theory of causality, we must look at it in terms of the principles of Stoic physics, according to which "no incorporeal interacts with a body and no body interacts with an incorporeal, but a body interacts with another body."[5] Bodies do not only interact in such a way as to produce new entities or new compounds but also bring about changes that can only be considered as incorporeal predicates. The Stoics say that "every cause is a body which becomes the cause to a body of something incorporeal: for instance, the scalpel, a body, becomes the cause to the flesh, a body, of the incorporeal predicate 'being cut'" (Sextus Empiricus *M* 9. 211 [*SVF* II 341]). While it is entirely coherent that the Stoics considered causes as corporeal, since they are currents of *pneum*a (Aetius, *Plac*. 1.11. 5 [*SVF* 2. 340]),

nonetheless it is surprising that they thought of the effect as a predicate. According to the assumptions of Stoic physics, it follows that the effect does not have any tangible reality, and its mode of "subsistence," is dependent on men being capable of expressing it in a linguistic form. The effect thus falls within the logical-linguistic sphere, it is what is predicated as true of the body upon which the cause acts, but which is distinct from the affected body. Therefore, it is not homogeneous to the cause. Moreover, Zeno's examples of causes, such as wisdom and soul, show that he conceives of the relation between cause and effect as necessary, in the sense that the cause necessarily entails its effect (see Stob. *Ecl.* 1.138.14–22 [*SVF* 1. 89]). Life is not conceivable without the soul nor the soul without life, because as soon as the soul ceases to exist, life also ceases with it. Therefore, the causal relation, as Zeno conceived of it, is that which links a qualified substance to its attributes, which cannot but belong to it as long as it persists as such. A further problematic aspect of Zeno's theory is his emphasis on the simultaneity of cause and effect, which does not seem to be reconcilable with the notion of antecedent cause closely associated with the Stoic notion of fate.

Zeno defined fate as a pneumatic power that moves matter in a certain order and in the same way, called alternatively Providence and Nature (see Aet. 1. 27, 5 [*SVF* 1.176], Stob. *Ecl*.1.79, 1 [*SVF* 2. 913]). Chrysippus specifies that it is an eternal movement, continuous and ordered (*SVF* 2. 916). According to a well-known definition by Chrysippus, fate is "a certain everlasting ordering of the whole: one set of things follows on and succeeds another and the interconnection is inviolable." It is "the rationale in accordance with which past events have happened, present events are happening, and future events will happen" (Gellius 7.2.3 [*SVF* 2. 1000] transl. LS).

Two main aspects emerge in Stoic definitions of fate: fate represents the natural order [*taxis*], and this explains why bodies follow one another in the order that they do; fate is an eternal movement and as such it is the only true efficient cause of the ordering of the cosmos. The Stoic cosmos is a unitary body, consisting not of adjacent elements but unified by a single tenor [*hexis*], as are the bodies formed by unification (see Sextus Empiricus *M* 9. 78). It is a perfect organism that has already defined inside itself all the causal history that it will have to accomplish in the space of a cosmic cycle, from the beginning to the end. Therefore, in order to explain the functioning of the universe, there is no need to resort to concepts such as effect or generation. The cause does not have to explain a process of generation, but must account for the structure of things. The individual events are all already regulated *ab aeterno* by an inviolable law that is fate. So, every event, from the most striking like the revolution of a star to the most irrelevant like the batting of an eyelash, is the result without exception of a given cause. This point of view inescapably makes the Stoics determinists.

However, Zeno does not seem fully aware of the problem that the thesis "all things come about through fate" poses for moral responsibility. Alongside the statement that "all things come about through fate," he argued forcefully that assent is in the power of man (see Cic. *Acad.* 40 [*SVF* 1. 61]). The argument for the compatibility of fate and that which is in the power of man relies on his belief that man is both part of the network of causes and, at the same time, aware of the order in which he is located: this awareness, which derives from full adherence to the order that governs the entire universe, allows him to accept willingly the law and, at once, to achieve autonomy. Moreover, Zeno, starting from the assumption that there was no difference between fate and Providence, believed that the Stoic cosmos was the best of all possible worlds, in which man could not but fully realize his nature. He does not seem to have attempted to link the distinction between the things that are "in our power" [*ta eph' hemin*] and the things that are "not in our power" [*ta ouk eph' hemin*] to two different kinds of causes, and this shows that he did not perceive the contradiction

between both the claim of the existence of fate and that of moral accountability. It is no wonder that the argument of libertarian opponents exploits Zeno's very distinction between things that are "in our power" and things that are not and shows that this distinction does not work for those who believe that all things come about through fate. They argue:

> If all things come about through fate, all things come about through what precedes in a regress to infinity and every event in the universe is connected to what precedes it in a mutual interdependence of all causes. Thus, representation will be the antecedent cause of impulse and, in turn, impulse will be the antecedent cause of assent. But if the cause of impulse, that is, representation, is not "in our power," it cannot be "in our power" what impulse brings about, obviously assent and action. Since this argument is unsound, the opponents conclude that not all events come about through fate. The result is that neither commendations nor reproofs nor honors nor punishments are just.
>
> (Cic. *De Fat.* 40, trans. LS)

If the cause-effect relation is a necessary relation, in the sense that the cause in its concrete operation is the perfect and sufficient cause of its effect and everything is determined by a cause in a regress to infinity, Zeno's claim that something is in man's power is a purely verbal statement. The "in our power" cannot be linked to a cause of a different kind to those posed by the causal network: in other words, nothing is in the power of man since everything is determined by causes that are perfectly capable of bringing about their effect. Libertarian opponents will never cease to blame the Stoics for the disastrous implications their position entails for human action.

Chrysippus' Distinction Between Causes and the Concept of What Is in Our Power[6]

There is reason to believe, however, that, according to Zeno, fate, as a natural and divine law, operates only in determining events external to man and not in determining man's decision of whether or not to assent. In the surviving fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes, there is no mention of a distinction between causes, nor does Zeno's distinction between things that are in our power and things that are not find any ground in the doctrine of causality. It was Chrysippus who first introduced a distinction between causes, and it is clear that it was designed to solve an ethical question and certainly not because of a new approach to a physical problem. It does not seem, from the evidence, that Chrysippus changed the assumptions of Zeno's physics to make room for a different theory of causality. Faced with the objections of the opponents and the impossibility of establishing moral action, Chrysippus' famous response that follows immediately after their argument tried to avoid the necessary connection between the antecedent causes and the impulses and assents by introducing a distinction between the causes.

> Of the causes—he says—some are perfect and principal, others auxiliary and proximate. Hence when we say that all things come about through fate by antecedent causes, we do not mean this to be understood as "by perfect and principal causes," but "by auxiliary and proximate causes."
>
> (*De Fat.* 41)

He thus counters the argument that I expounded a moment ago in the following way:

> If all things come about through fate, it does follow that all things come about by antecedent causes—not however by principal and perfect causes, but by auxiliary and proximate causes. If these latter are not "in our power," it does not follow that not even impulse is "in our power." If, on the other hand, we said that all things come about by perfect and principal causes, it would follow that, since these causes were not "in our power," impulse would not be "in our power" either.
>
> (*De Fat.* 41, transl. LS slightly modified)

From Cicero's testimony, it follows that Chrysippus did not provide a definition of any of the four causes but distinguished them by their role in the context of the relationship between fate and human action. Chrysippus' answer is intended to free man's assent from the necessity of fate and, consequently, to defend moral responsibility.

This concern will be evident if we look at Chrysippus' analogy between the behavior of the cylinder and the cone on an inclined plane—which cannot begin to move without a push—and human action. The pushing agent is the external cause of the movement, while the nature of the cylinder is the internal cause. The push prompts the beginning of the motion and extends until the cylinder begins to roll and the cone begins to spin: after receiving the push, it is by their natures, for "what remains [*quod superest*]" (*De Fat*. 42) that the cylinder rolls and the cone spins. What can be deduced from Chrysippus' analogy between the behavior of the cylinder and cone and human action is that representation, like the push for the cylinder, is the external triggering cause of movement. Assent is "in our power" because it is in its nature to accept or refuse representation as the two different ways of rolling after the push are in the different natures of the cylinder and the cone. While the cylinder or cone will always react in the same way, assent will react to the stimulus in different ways depending on the circumstances, accepting or refusing the representation.

In this process, two causes are involved, both equally necessary: the preliminary one, external, which gives the cylinder the movement, and the shape of the cylinder, i.e. the internal cause, which establishes the quality of movement. From a physical point of view, the internal cause is responsible for the states and movements necessary for the being of that object according to its essential properties, while the cause auxiliary, or proximate, is responsible for the movements that are impressed on that object from the outside and that connect it with other external bodies and minds. However, neither is the assent capable of refusing the "corporeality" of the representation as an imprint on the commanding-faculty, nor can the cylinder or cone resist the push that is impressed on them from the outside[7]. Assent may be viewed as, at one and the same time, both voluntary and inevitable. From a physical point of view, it consists of an immediate response to the movement required by the imprint brought about in the commanding-faculty. It is significant that Cicero, referring twice to the example of the cylinder—the second time reporting the quotation of Chrysippus—underlines that the internal cause, after the push, will react "with its own force and nature [*suapte vi et natura*]," "as to the rest [*quod reliquum est*]."[8] The internal cause acts within the limits of "what remains," in the sense that its causal effectiveness operates in a context governed by fatal causes that, however, from the human point of view, do not manifest themselves as necessary. What the internal cause is able to "do" on its own is maintain a state but it is not able to start a process. The geometric shape of the cylinder determines its state and the quality of its movement, so the way it is structured comes to be true of it, for it ensures that it is and will always be a cylinder. One cannot, however, conclude that Chrysippus has identified the perfect cause with the nature of the cylinder or assent in human action. If the causal effectiveness of the internal cause, which

would be defined as perfect, depends on the fact that it automatically achieves its effect, the external cause must also be considered perfect, as it is the necessary cause of the movement. After all, for Chrysippus as for Zeno, a cause, to be such, must be active and therefore also the external cause, if it is a cause, can only bring about the effect. Moreover, according to the doctrine that Seneca (*Ep*. 65, 4) attributes to his masters, the Stoics did not consider the conditions necessary for an event to happen to be a cause, but only what actively produces it. When Chrysippus identifies representation as the proximate external cause of assent, it means that it comes into play as an efficient cause in the production of human action and not as a necessary condition. Action requires both representation and assent as "cooperating causes,"[9] Moreover, even if assent were allowed to be the perfect cause because it is in its power to yield to representation or not, the character and the different natural predispositions of each one of us, which are part of the causal network of fate, cannot help but need it (see Gellius VII 2 [*SVF* 2. 1000], *Cic. De Fat*. 9–11). The problem is, therefore, to understand what Chrysippus means by perfect cause, since there seems to be no doubt that he has used this concept. He cannot have used it in the sense of what alone is able to produce an effect because neither the external cause nor the internal cause ~~is~~ capable of doing so.

The only Greek source that explicitly deals with Chrysippus' distinction between causes is Plutarch in *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* (1056-C-D), albeit in a polemical context. According to Plutarch, Chrysippus distinguished between two kinds of causes: the initial causes [*prokatarktikai*] and the complete causes [*autoteleis*]. Representation is not the complete cause of assent, but simply the initial one. This means that it cannot by itself bring about the assent, that is, human action. Now, since representation is part of the causal network of fate—Plutarch argues—fate likewise can only be a *prokatarktike* cause of human action. It is clear that Plutarch's interest is to underline the contradiction into which Chrysippus would fall regarding fate as not being a complete cause of human action but only *prokatarktike*, that is to say, only the initial one. Thus, since the initial cause is weaker than the perfect one, the dilemma in which Chrysippus would find himself would be this: "If fate is the perfect cause of all things, it destroys "what is in our power" [*to eph' hemin*] and what is voluntary [*to ekousion*], and if it is an initial cause, it loses its being unimpeded and fully effective." It remains to be seen if assent can be regarded as the perfect cause of human action, since Plutarch merely says that, according to Chrysippus, neither representation nor fate are perfect causes of human action, but he does not say either that assent is the perfect cause. It is the *prokatarktike* cause that is defined in opposition to the perfect one. What strikes us in Plutarch's words, reproaching Chrysippus about the contradiction into which he would fall, is that the internal cause on which the assent depends is defined as "what is in our power." The hypothesis that Chrysippus did not name the internal cause with a technical term, but that he referred to it as "what is in our power," cannot be excluded. This hypothesis is also supported by the use of the concept of "in our power" to mean the internal cause in the argument of the libertarian opponents of *De Fato* 40. It is obvious that their criticism, for chronological reasons, can only be leveled at the doctrine of the early Stoics, since it is followed by Chrysippus' reply and, above all, because it makes no reference to a distinction between causes. Chrysippus, therefore, by his distinction between causes, intends to contrast the Stoic meaning of the concept of "what is in our power" with the indeterminist one of the opponents, finding, at the same time, a role for it within the causal network of fate.

However, the fact that Chrysippus did not give a name to the concept of "what is in our power" within his distinction of the causes points to a difficulty that Carneades will not fail to highlight. In the *De Fato*, Carneades, who is also the possible anonymous

opponent of Chrysippus in Plutarch's testimony, argues that the concept of "what is in our power" is incompatible with the Stoic definition of fate.[10] Starting from the Stoic premises that establish the existence of fate on the assumption that everything happens by antecedent causes, Carneades draws the opposite conclusion to Chrysippus', that is, that necessity of fate brings about everything. But since this conclusion contradicts the Stoic premise that "something is in our power," then, he concludes, "it is not the case that whatever events take place take place by fate" (*De Fat*. 31). An important point we gather from Plutarch's testimony is that the notion of initial cause makes sense if placed in the light of the causal effectiveness of fate towards human beings. The same conclusion is also reached by Cicero's account in the *De Fato.* [11] Chrysippus, faced with the objections of the indeterminists, justifies the Stoic position by stating that the proposition "If all things come about through fate, it does follow that all things come about by antecedent causes" must be understood as "all things come about through fate by auxiliary and proximate causes not by perfect and principal causes" (*De Fat*. 41). It follows then that both the "perfect and principal causes" and "auxiliary and proximate causes" cannot but be antecedent causes, unless we admit that some causes, i.e. the perfect and principal ones, are not part of the causal chain of fate.[12] This means that the antecedent causes are the entirety of causes.[13] Otherwise, we would have to assume that fate is made up of two sets of causes, the antecedent causes and the perfect and principal causes,[14] and we should first explain why the Stoics constantly express the thesis of fate as "all things happen through fate by antecedent causes," and second, what "antecedent" means in relation to the concept of cause.

To grasp the rationale that supports the Stoic theory of causality, we must bear in mind that the movement that pervades the universe is the tensional movement of the *pneum*a. Therefore, the position of a body does not automatically make it the previous cause of what follows, even if the law of causality operating on the bodies must respect the laws that govern them. The characteristics that define a body are the extension in space and the persistence in time, and, since acting and being acted upon are carried out through movement, bodies act through impact, resistance and contact. This means that a body reacts when it is affected by another body. Hence, bodies being in contact with each other is a crucial aspect of causality. However, the causal relationship occurs between bodies acting on other bodies, either in spatial contact with each other, or through the medium of *pneuma* (see *SVF* 2. 343, 340 and Sambursky 1959: 53). Stoics considered bodies in contact with each other to be contiguous and, according to the theory of universal sympathy,[15] also distant bodies were thought to be contiguous through the tension that the pneuma transmits to them (see Alex Aphrod. *Mixt.* 223, 34–6 [*SVF* 2. 441]). The tensional movement of *pneuma* differs from that of locomotion in that it propagates from a distance. It is a movement out of itself and into itself, and it moves simultaneously in many and opposite directions. It begins from the center of the body, extends outwards to its edges, and returns again to the place where it started. This implies that within the cosmos as a unitary body, causality is not expressed as the production of a process, but as a power of cohesion and maintenance of a state, while it acts as a movement that takes place in space and time at the level of the bodies and towards the individual parts. It seems, therefore, that in such a structured universe, there is no place for a causality that expresses itself through the action of bodies on each other according to a sequence where what precedes is the cause of what follows. The succession of all events is determined once and for all by fate. The relation between causes is also a relation of sequence that subordinates each to the other, since it is precisely according to the world order that all beings derive from one another.

The Antecedent Causes and the Causal Chain of Fate

At this point we need to clarify the notion of "antecedent cause," which is at the basis of the Stoic doctrine of fate and thus of the principle that nothing happens without a cause. In the causal network, a cause cannot from a chronological point of view be "antecedent" in the sense of preceding its effect because in the causal network there is no place for effects that in turn are posed as the cause of a subsequent effect. Nor can one cause be called the effect of another. Moreover, Zeno's definition of a cause points out that the cause and the effect cannot but be simultaneous. This kind of causality does not take place over time, but describes the structure of individual bodies, i.e. it provides the explanation of the link between a qualified substratum and its states and movements. So, it applies to a universe already constituted *ab aeterno* where each event is connected to the one that precedes it through a continuous interdependence of all things in an infinite process that has its starting point at the recurrence of each cosmic cycle. Therefore, saying that fate is the chain of all causes does not add anything to saying that fate is the chain of all antecedent causes.

In the *De Fato* we find the *causae antecedentes* in conjunction with *naturales* to indicate our natural predispositions (9, 14), with *externae* to indicate the causes external to the human will, that is, representation (23, 42). And it is noteworthy that Carneades, arguing against the Stoics in support of the Epicureans, employs the expression *sine causa* in a narrow sense to understand "without an antecedent external cause," thus opposing the Stoic conception of fate but not intending the total absence of causality (23). Obviously, the adjective *antecedentes* is repeated several times in the Stoic wording of fate, *si omnia fato fiunt, omnia causis antecedentibus fiunt* (24, 31, 40) to indicate the causes comprising fate. Moreover, Carneades' arguments against the Stoic concept of cause show that the notion of antecedent cause is meaningless if "antecedent" is taken in its temporal meaning and not as the determination of a necessary law, when it is not linked to eternal causes. He does not object to the concept of efficient cause but to the concept of *natural efficient* cause.[16] He agrees with the Stoics that an efficient cause is what necessarily produces the effect, but he does not concede that the causes should be included in a continuous causal network so as to be intrinsically linked to Nature and the world order.[17] It would seem that Chrysippus' concern is not to restrict the causal power of fate but to justify the role of assent, that is "what is in our power" within the causal chain of fate. Anyway, if Chrysippus had conceived of fate, and hence of external cause, as comprising non-necessitating causes, the libertarian opponents would not have had any contradiction to reproach to him with, since their positions would not have differed significantly. Chrysippus' analogy between the cylinder and the cone on an inclined plane and human action exemplifies that representation, as a push from the outside is a necessary cause of its own effect, that is of an alteration in the soul, but it is not a necessary cause of the assent and therefore of the action.[18] While it is true that the causal relationship between representation and assent is not necessitated, Chrysippus, however, by making representation the external and proximate cause of assent, brings it into play as an efficient cause in the production of human action and not as a necessary condition.[19] The point is that Chrysippus sensed that the solution to the problem of moral responsibility lies in the fact that something is "in our power," and that is the assent. But then he lets it act within the framework of "what remains" after the external antecedent cause, i.e. the representation, has acted. By the analogy between the cylinder and the cone and human action, Chrysippus intended to demonstrate that what distinguishes human causality, or what explains that "something is in our power," is that our actions, albeit included in the causal network, are determined mainly by our nature, but not by it alone. Both assent and

representation bring about human action as cooperating causes. Our actions are attributable to us because assent is not externally forced by representation, though we do not have any possibility of acting otherwise. Man achieves fulfillment by acknowledging the whole—a great, perfect, rational cosmos that is God—of which he is a part, and by performing actions that are in accordance with universal Nature, because "human natures are parts of the Nature of the whole" (DL 7.87).

From Cicero's testimony it would seem that Chrysippus had conceived the doctrine of causality according to an internal/external dichotomy, to which, however, the causes grouped into two by two, perfect and principal, on the one hand, and auxiliary and proximate, on the other, are not exactly overlapping with the quadripartition of the causes. The causa principalis is not always an internal cause (*De Fat*. 9), just as a proximate cause is not always an external cause. The auxiliary cause would seem to be an external cause to the extent that it does not play a main role in bringing about the effect inherent to the principal cause. The adjective "principal" would apply to the fact that the activity of the cause is what is most important in the production of the effect, the adjective proximate would apply to the physical-spatial position of one cause in relation to another, and the adjective auxiliary to the contribution that the external cause makes to the internal one. It would seem, therefore, that the fourfold division of causes does not correspond so much to the identification of four different causes as to four different ways of expressing the causal relationship. Proof of this would be that in *De Fato* the representation indicates the external, proximate or auxiliary cause, depending on the point of view from which its causal relationship with assent is considered. However, for something to be a cause, it must be efficient, that is, it must actively bring about the effect. The perfect cause cannot be traced back to a single cause but rather refers to the idea of a causality that brings about its effect completely, which belongs, as such, to the causal chain of fate in its totality.[20] If we consider the causal chain of fate from a cosmic perspective, it is composed of bodies that are connected to each other by a natural interwoven network that is expressed through an external causal link; if we consider it from the perspective of individual bodies, each body is the cause of its being structured in a particular way, according to the expression of internal causality. But these external/internal aspects are nothing more than the way in which a single and identical inviolable causal law, that of fate, manifests itself. To use Chrysippus' terminology, at least according to the oldest testimony, namely Plutarch who explicitly mentions it, Chrysippus in conceiving of fate as the *prokatarktike* cause of all things did not conceive of it as weaker, but as "an invincible, unblockable and inflexible cause."[21]

Notes

1 Sources do not agree if it was Cleanthes or Zeno himself who added this specification.
2 In recent years, a debate has arisen among scholars on the question of whether Stoic ethics is autonomous or dependent on the laws of physics and cosmology. For an overview of the different interpretations on this question, see Betegh 2003.
3 For more on the concept of *pneuma*, see Tamer Nawar's chapter in this volume, "The Stoic Theory of the Soul."
4 Lapidge 1978.
5 See *SVF* 1. 518 on Cleanthes' argument in support for the corporeality of the soul.
6 I have dealt more extensively with this subject in other studies to which I will refer the reader: Ioppolo, 1988; 1994; 2007.
7 Remember that Zeno defines representation as an impression on the soul, conceived of in strongly physical terms, which is to say as an imprint mechanically produced by the impact of an object upon the soul, comparable to the one left by the seal on a signet ring in wax: see Sextus

Empiricus *M* 7.228, 230, 236, 372, 8,400, Anon. *in Plat. Theaet.* XI 27–31 (ed. Bastianini Sedley: 290), and Ioppolo, 1990: 1994.

8 See *De Fat*. 42: *sed revertitur ad cylindrum et ad turbinem suum, quae moveri incipere nisi pulsa non possunt. id autem cum accidit,**suapte natura, quod superest**, et cylindrum volvi et versari turbinem putat*; 43: *quem ad modum in cylindro dictum est, extrinsecus pulsa**, quod reliquum est, suapte vi et natura**movebitur.*

9 Chrysippus explained the mechanism of action as a single act of the commanding-faculty of the soul, which takes place in 4 stages: representation, assent, impulse, action, and which being simultaneous cannot be distinguished in a time sequence: see Stob. *Ecl*.2. 88, 1 *(SVF* 3. 171) Plutarch *Stoic. Rep.* 11, 1037 f (*SVF* 3.175) and Ioppolo, 1987: 1990.

10 See Allen's chapter in this volume, "Free Will and Fate in Carneades' Academic Skepticism."

11 Plutarch's distinction between causes in two can be conceptually traced back to the more articulated distinction in four in Cic. *Fat*. 40–2.

12 *De Fat.* 41: *Chrysippus autem, cum et necessitatem inprobaret et nihil vellet**sine praepositis causis**evenire, causarum genera distingui*t.

13 See *De Fat*. 21: *quod si ita est, omnia quae fiunt causis fiunt antegressis; id si ita est, omnia fato fiunt; efficitur igitur fato fieri quaecumque fiant*.

14 This is Bobzien's thesis (1998: 301–10), which she calls "Non-identity View" and with which I disagree, as will emerge from the context, and which I cannot tackle in detail here for reasons of space.

15 See Chrysippus' arguments on cosmic *sympatheia* in Cic. *De Fat.*7 and Sedley, 2003: 321.

16 The Stoic identification of fate with Nature (see *SVF* 1.176, 2. 937, 945, etc.) confirms that the expression "natural causes" was known by the early Stoics, unlike what Bobzien 1998: 296, n. 130, claims; see Ioppolo 2007; Sedley 1993: 315.

17 *De Fat*. 34: *quod si concedatur nihil posse evenire nisi causa antecedente, quid proficiatur, si ea causa non ex aeternis causis apta ducatur?*

18 *De Fat.* 43: *sic visum obiectum inprimet illud quidem et quasi signabit in animo suam speciem sed adsensio nostra erit in potestate.*

19 *De Fat*. 36: *nec id sine quo quippiam non fit causa est, sed id, quod cum accessit, id cuius est causa efficit necessario.*

20 In support of the hypothesis that Chrysippus did not identify the perfect cause with a single cause, see Görler 1987: 264, also Schröder 1989: 8 ss., who stresses that the sources always define the perfect cause in a negative way, for what it is not and not for what it is.

21 Plutarch *Stoic. Rep.* 1056 c.

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20

STOICS AND EPICUREANS ON LANGUAGE AND THE WORLD

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Introduction

There could hardly be a greater contrast between Stoics and Epicureans than the ways in which each school thought about language: on its nature, its origins, its relation to the world and our place in it, and its rôles in philosophical and education inquiry, their disagreements were fundamental, and tell us much about their disparate interests, methods, and values.

This paper will focus on three areas of teaching in particular. The first part shows how the problem of the origins of language opens up to us the two schools' understanding both of our place in the cosmos, and of how language can be useful to philosophers. Part 2 turns to the relation between language, thought, and the world; here we see how the Stoics constructed a bridge from language to logic which the Epicureans thought led nowhere. Finally, the third part explores the positions Epicureans and Stoics took up on the place of language in education and civic life, especially with regard to dialectical training, rhetoric—the theory and teaching of public speaking—and poetry and poetics. Each section attempts to trace interconnections with the others, with other areas of philosophy, and with other contemporary disciplines that dealt with language, such as textual criticism.

The Origins of Language

The Stoics were renowned for their interest in etymology—that is, *semantic* etymology, which seeks to explain the appropriateness of a name to its signification; it is not a forerunner of the modern discipline of historical linguistics. (Indeed, we find very little in Stoic sources about the historical origin of names.) Note that this whole enterprise concerns "names," not language as a whole—although what counts as a "name" was open to dispute—and that what is explained is the *actual* basis for the names, not ordinary users' understanding of them. The seminal text in the field of semantic etymology, Plato's *Cratylus*, was often read in antiquity as endorsing the possibility, and usefulness, of etymology as recovering from names coded descriptions of the things they signify.

Stoic theology, part of their natural philosophy, was especially rich in etymologies of divine names and epithets that showed them to be consistent with Stoic teaching. As *pneuma*, a rarefied, subtle blend of fire and air, the Stoic god imminently shapes and qualifies objects, and as "fate" *heimarmenê* ("what is allotted"), is *heirmos aitiôn*, a "chain of

causes," binding them in a complex web of cause and effect; he is also providence and *logos* (DL 7.135), bearing the name of the supreme Greek deity, "Zeus," but "addressed differently according to his powers [*dunameis*]." For example, he is called *Dia* (an accusative form of "Zeus") as that "because of whom [*di' hon*]" all things happen (147, where Diogenes, or his source, awards these etymologies merely "a sort of appropriateness").

A very different, but similarly cautious, elucidation of a word's semantic load was made by Chrysippus to support his thesis that the locus of the mind [*dianoia*] is the heart. When pronouncing the first syllable of the pronoun *egô* "I", the jaw moves downward "demonstratively [*deiktikôs*]," rather as when, "pointing at [*deiknuntes*]" ourselves, we "naturally and appropriately" use a hand-gesture towards the chest (Galen, *On the doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* [*PHP*] 2.2.10–11; *cf.* English "myself"). This is but one of many linguistic and para-linguistic phenomena Chrysippus adduces to support his thesis; although he emphasizes that this is merely "plausible [*pithanon*]" or "reasonable [*eulogon*]" evidence, "consistent with [*akolouthon*]" his theory, many of them are derided by Galen, whose own view is that etymology is "an imposter [*alazôn*]" (*PHP* 2.2.7). Galen also reports versions of an argument to the same conclusion by Zeno of Citium, founder of the Stoa, Chrysippus, and his pupil Diogenes of Babylon (c. 230–c. 145) (2.5.7–10). All of them, Galen says, confuse spatial with causal origin, and neglect anatomical evidence altogether.

Semantic appropriateness is not found in all names. Chrysippus noted "a great deal of anomaly" in privatives such as *athanatos* [immortal], which absurdly implies the gods have been deprived of something, death, that naturally belongs to them (Simplicius, *On Aristotle's "Categories"* [*cats.*] 396.19–21). Another text suggests it is unlikely that Chrysippus was proposing to exclude such privatives, however. Cicero mocks Chrysippus for telling astrologers not to frame their predictions as conditional propositions, but like this: "It is not the case both that Fabius was born at the rising of Sirius and that Fabius will die at sea" (Cicero, *On fate* 15–17). Yet Chrysippus almost certainly thought this rather the right way of *understanding* the "rules" [*themata*] of astrology—regarded by him as an "expertise" [*technê*] or a rule-governed, teachable discipline—which lack the necessary connection appropriate to conditionals.

The Roman grammarian and antiquarian Varro was fully aware that Chrysippus had been most interested in *semantic* similarity (*On the Latin language* [*LL*] 9.1–6), but he sowed confusion here nonetheless by introducing the notion of inflectional analogy into the debate, and even more so by framing as an all-or-nothing war between "analogists" and "anomalists" what was really a series of skirmishes over whether analogy with similar words could properly be used to determine the correct inflected form of this or that word. As one criterion of similarity is meaning, there is an overlap—strictly limited—between the two kinds of analogy, inflectional and semantic. Chrysippus himself used the model of kinship to capture inflectional morphology: that is, derived forms of a word ("sons") can "sometimes" be recovered from the original form (the "father") and *vice versa* (*LL* 10.59). Varro, whose authorities here include another Stoic as well, Antipater of Tarsus (second century BCE), argues that without such familial resemblances, languages would be impossible to learn (8.3–10). Suppose a word had the nominative form "Priam" and the genitive "Hecuba": each would have to be learned separately (a married couple being kith, not kin). As it is, the genitive form *Priami* makes its kinship to the nominative *Priamus* obvious. This model may have helped the Stoics systematize the networks of relations amongst word-forms and the things they signify (cf. also *Scholia on Dionysius Thrax's "Art of Grammar"* [DTSch.] 251.3–4, 6–9).

The Stoic theory of the origins of language (glossogenesis) also focuses on how certain sounds are suitable for naming certain sorts of thing. Our principal source here, Augustine's *On dialectic* (Chapter 7), reports three such modes, none of which, however, make use of Chrysippus' appeal to the mode of articulation.

The first and simplest is onomatopoeia (e.g. the *hinnitus* of horses, the *balatum* of sheep); such imitations are of course always mediated by a particular language's phonology. The second is synaesthesia, where appropriateness lies in a (perceived) similarity between some (perceived) property of the thing named and some (perceived) property of the sound (e.g. *mel* [honey] contains "soft" sounds appropriate to a "soft" thing). This mode, which is restricted to perceptual qualities, assumes that comparisons between sensory modalities are possible; furthermore, the similarity in question may be merely a matter of learned associations limited to individual language communities. Then there is the phenomenon of change within languages, as with one of Augustine"s examples, *vis* "force, strength," which, he says, is suitably "sturdy [*robustum*]" and "strong [*validum*]," presumably because of its initial *v-* sound, as in English *vine*; but in the élite pronunciation this had once been an unvoiced bilabial fricative like the *w-* in *wine.* Varro, at least, did recognize the destructive effects wrought by time and change on sounds and significations (e.g. *LL* 5.5) and also seems aware of the way words may be altered by different phonologies (*cf.* 6.2.5): but just how much change can occur before the sound/sense association is lost?

The third Stoic mode of name-formation, which Augustine presents as somehow improper or "catachrestic," is by extension from names formed by the second, according to any kind of similarity between the objects named (e.g. a swimming-pool is called a *piscina* in Latin even though people, not fish, *pisces*, swim in it). This mode has been linked to the system of tropes, such as metaphor, that became a fixture in rhetoric and literary criticism, but we do not have direct evidence that the Stoics invented it. Finally, some names were said to have arisen by contrariety, one example of which is so notorious it is commonly used to refer to the whole mode: *lucus a non lucendo*. A "grove" [*lucus*] is so called because it is not well-lit, the genitive case of the Latin word *lux* [light] being *lucis*. This example will seem less bizarre in light (so to say) of the Greek practice of "apotropaic" naming, which "turns away" the attentions of dangerous supernatural beings by giving them flattering names (the Furies are the *Eumenides* or "Kindly Ones") or avoids summoning them unawares (cf. Plato's *Cratylus* 403a, 404c-e).

All this tells us little about how humans began to use language. Perhaps the Stoics thought of *logos* in humans—which includes both the ability to reason and the capacity for rational discourse—as the gift of the universe to humans, either directly, or thanks to the insight of some wise man, as Posidonius argued in the case of the basic skills such as blacksmithing or carpentry (cf. *Ep.* 90.5ff.). The Stoics are usually thought to have maintained that early humans, or perhaps their king(s), could invent words appropriate to things' natures because they understood (in some limited way) the nature of the world; but this kind of theory is found only in sources perhaps inspired by Stoicism.

The sort of single name-giver Posidonius may have postulated is ridiculed by the first century BCE Epicurean author Lucretius (*DRN* 5.1046–55). People could not have understood what this individual was saying and, since they had never used names themselves, they could have had no idea of their "*utilitas*" [usefulness]. Lucretius offers instead his school's own theory (1020–90): it was nature that made us vocalize in response to the various sensations evoked by external objects; other animals do this too, yet they are described as "dumb" [*muta*], implying, perhaps, that human vocalizations were already at least partly articulate. In any case, there is nothing surprising, Lucretius says, about our using those uniquely varied vocalizations as names for different things.

It was Epicurus himself (341–271 BCE) who first devised this remarkable "naturalistic" theory (*cf. Ep. Hdt.* 75–6). Lucretius' account comes within the story of the rise of civilization (*cf.* e.g. *DRN* 5.1360–9); Epicurus, in contrast, is explaining certain natural phenomena, and begins with a general claim that "nature was taught and coerced by things in many ways." Thus names were first made, not by "imposition" [*thesis*], but by "nature" [*phusis*]—almost certainly another allusion to Plato's *Cratylus*—before "calculation" [*logismos*] then made various improvements (also not mentioned by Lucretius). Epicurus' model allows him to introduce an important novelty (to which Lucretius does not allude) in order to explain how names can be "natural" when human beings use different ones for the same things—an objection that rests on the assumption, very common in antiquity, that natural phenomena are universally uniform. To meet it, Epicurus appeals precisely to "the very natures of human beings," as produced by different physical environments; different "peoples" [*ethnê*] have inborn sensory and psychological differences, and, naturally enough, different vocalisations too, which calculation made shorter and more precise, while also contributing to the discovery of new names for imperceptibles. And as with the third Stoic mode of word-formation, extensions to new significations were allowed; atoms and void, for example, the imperceptible bases of the school's natural philosophy, get their names from the ordinary Greek words meaning "uncuttable" [*atomos*] and "empty" [*kenos*] respectively.

Epicurus' theory is the most complex and compelling ancient naturalistic theory of the origin of language, even in the reduced forms in which it survives. Of course, it does not explain how particular words came to be, but at best "of what kind they are" (Varro, *LL* 6.39). Moreover, vocalisations had somehow to come under voluntary control; and it seems that each and every individual was in the position of the discredited "single namer," who was given "first of all | power to know and visualize what he wanted to do" with vocalizations (*DRN* 5.1048–9). Here Lucretius' account helps by suggesting, first, that our ancestors must have "felt" (*cf.* 1033) the communicative power of vocalization even before they had fully mastered their vocal apparatus, like the aggressive bullock that tries to use its non-existent horns (1034–5)—a version of the so-called "cradle argument" in ethics, premised on the untaught behavior of new-borns (e.g. Cicero, *De Fin.* 1.29–32). Second, "usefulness" "shaped (*expressit*) names for things" (1028–9); that is, it helped our ancestors master their fully developed, but imperfectly exploited, organs of articulation. Yet when early humans are described as "stammeringly [*balbe*] signifying, using vocalizations and gestures, | that it is right for all to pity the weak" (1022–3), it is hard to see how they could convey, or even conceive of, so subtle a message, as if the capacity for complex thought were independent of the complexity of vocalizations. We will find confirmation elsewhere of this tendency in Epicurean teaching.

Language, Thought, and Reality

For the Stoics, mirroring the intertwined powers of the rational soul was the part of Stoic philosophy devoted to *logos* itself, "logic" in the broadest sense. Its two main subdivisions are rhetoric (public, formal discourse as practiced in courts and assemblies, and festivals) and dialectic, which is more narrowly philosophical.

Our principal source for Stoic dialectic as a whole is a first century BCE survey preserved as DL 7.48–83. In the subdivision devoted to "vocalization" [*phônê*] are theoretical accounts of all the constituents of discourse. In this context, *logos* is defined as "articulate significant vocalization" (55), and in fact what are traditionally the "parts of speech" were for the Stoa "parts of *logos*" (57). Despite its decisive impact on the emerging discipline of

grammar (Diogenes of Babylon's *(Technical manual) On vocalization* was probably one of the main conduits of Stoic teaching to non-philosophers with linguistic interests), two deep and broad differences (as well as numerous particular disagreements) separate Stoics from the grammarians whom they influenced.

First, there was no single division within Stoic teaching that corresponds to "technical grammar." Second, the Stoics who constructed the school's dialectic, led by Chrysippus and Diogenes of Babylon, focused on rational discourse as the vehicle of rational argument (*logos* again). This had, of course, always been the heartland of dialectic, and Stoic dialectical theory comprised a network of support-systems for success in the practices of building and evaluating arguments, such as definitions (DL 7.60–2), which played a vital rôle in Stoic teaching, so much so that they were sometimes given their own subdivision within "logic" (43, 44) rather than within the "vocalization" section of dialectic, and the treatment of ambiguous "articulate utterance" [*lexis*] (62) and the "excellences" [*aretai*] of discourse, including *Hellenismos* or "good Greek" (59).

But Diocles' detailed account begins with the definition of the *phantasia* or representational mental state, since the "rational" [*logikê phantasia*]—also called a "thought" [*noêsis*]—is precisely the sort the content of which can be articulated in *logos* and thus communicated between one mind and another. By contrast, parrots may produce *lexis*, but not *logos*, according to Chrysippus (Varro, *LL* 6.56); later, a distinction was drawn between two types of *logos*—one "pronunciative" [*prophorikos*], the other "dispositional" [*endiathetos*]—the former lacking any connection to rationally "disposed" states of mind (cf. Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.127). The incorporeal contents of thoughts and *logoi* (which are alike corporeal) are *lekta* [sayables], which, while not themselves linguistic, represent the school's most distinctive contribution to theorising about language in antiquity. Hence, as Diocles says, "The appearance comes first; then the mind [*dianoia*], which is capable of speech, enunciates in *logos* what is done to it by the appearance" (DL 7.49), the *lekton* being the link between appearance and speech.

Lekta were central to Stoic "logic" in the narrow sense too, as a theory of arguments and their properties. The most important kind of *lekton* was the basic truth-value-bearer and constituent of arguments called the *axiôma* from a verb meaning "judge correct" (DL 7.65), since an *axiôma,* being necessarily truth-valued, can be judged correct or incorrect, asserted or denied. Simple *axiômata* are unlike the propositions of modern logic above all in having a quasi-linguistic structure. One of their two elements is a "predicate" or *katêgorêma,* which is an incomplete *lekton* signified by a verb, and always either active, passive, or middle (7.58, 64). (The association with verbs may explain why *lekta* were also called *pragmata* [things done], assuming that predicates were the first kind of *lekton* to be identified.) The other element is a "case" [*ptôsis*], usually "direct" or nominative (65), although Stoic cases are not grammatical cases, but the counterparts of subjects in the far more familiar, variable-order {subject-object-verb} structure—which is, however, alien to ancient linguistic theory.

Whether cases are *lekta* or word-forms is not made clear by our sources, and is still disputed: if the former, it seems at least some nominals must signify two sorts of thing at once (external objects, cases); if the latter, something incorporeal, such as a proposition, must be formed from an incorporeal predicate together with a corporeal word-form. That there should be *some* difference between cases and word-forms is certainly plausible; moreover, we can see how it might have helped Stoics explain linguistic communication. The chief problem here was the very feature of *lekta* that made them attractive as contents of *phantasiai* and *logoi*, namely, their incorporeality, for, being incorporeal, they are also causally inert, and so cannot actually create *phantasiai* (cf. *M* 8.406–10). Some other route to understanding must be found.

The term *ptôsis* is cognate with the Greek verb *piptein*, meaning "fall" (cf. Latin *cadere, casus*), and Stoics held that the nominative is a case on the grounds that it, too, had "fallen" from something—our "conception" [*ennoia*] of the object named by the nominal (Ammonius, *in Ar. int.* 42.30–44.10). Diogenes of Babylon thought of *logos* as being "embossed [*ensesêmasmenon*]" by conceptions in the mind (*PHP* 2.5.15); similarly, Chrysippus talked of vocalizations "being printed on [*sêmainesthai*]" by the mind, and claimed that "things said [*legomena*]" "imprint themselves [*ensêmainetai*]" on it (2.5.20). So in the sentence "*Diôn philei Theôna*," "Dion loves Theon," for example, the nominative case "Diôn" could lead users directly to their shared concept of Dion, while the other, "Theôna," leads first to its "direct" case, "Theôn," and thence to the concept of Theon, from which that case has fallen. "Oblique" cases typically complement incomplete predicates (e.g. "loves…") to make complete predicates that can combine with direct cases.

This sort of tracking would apply both to "proper names" [*onomata*] such as "Dion," and to "appellatives" [*prosêgoriai*] which include both common nouns and adjectives (DL 7.58). (The Stoics were in fact the first to distinguish these two kinds of nominal.) An *onoma* is defined as "indicating [*dêloun*]" a "unique quality," which characterizes a single individual, a *prosêgoria* as "signifying [*sêmainon*]" a "common quality" shared by individuals belonging to a single kind. Both inflect for case, as does the *arthron* or "article" class (59), which comprises pronouns and definite articles; for example, as a part of *logos, houtos* "this (male) one" would be an "article," but in propositions, e.g. "This (male) one walks," it is termed a "direct demonstrative [*deiktikê*] case." Like the proper name and the appellative, it defines a type of proposition (79).

The {case-predicate} structure was conceived of as complete, perhaps syntactically, perhaps semantically: of the two known Stoic classifications of predicates, one is syntactic, while the other combines syntactic with semantic elements (DL 7.64; Ammonius, *in Ar. int*. 44.11–46.19, reporting the third century CE Neoplatonist Porphyry). Crucially, syntax was dealt with in Stoic dialectic primarily at the level of *lekta*, not of vocalizations; as a result, grammarians, who saw themselves as dealing with utterances, tended at first to deal with the subject, when they did, *via* the "parts of speech," not as a topic in its own right. There is some indirect evidence from Varro (*LL* 6.56) that Chrysippus may have thought of language-knowledge as in part constituted by knowledge of the place in a sentence held by each part or, as he called them, each "element" [*stoikheion*] of *logos* (e.g. Galen, *PHP* 8.3.13, 498.3–8, with the etymology of *stoikheion* at DTScholia 35.24–6, 318.7–16, and cf. Apollonius Dyscolus, *On syntax* [*synt.*] 1.2, pp2.3–3.1 for a more complex development of the same idea). In passing we should note a few connections between Stoic semantics and the two other divisions of Stoic philosophy. The effects of causes are *lekta* (Clement, *Strom.* 8.9.26.3–4), and aitiology was one part of Stoic natural philosophy (DL 7.132). Of importance to ethics are the theories that acceptance of an appearance as true is assent to its propositional content (Sextus, *M* 7.154), as assents determine how one will act (cf. DL 7.48) and that impulses to act are directed towards predicates (Stobaeus 2.98.1–6).

The "part of *logos*" still to be mentioned is the "connector" [*sundesmos*] defined as "binding" [*sundoun*] the other parts (DL 7.58), although in our sources what they generally bind are two propositions into a single non-simple proposition; in a conditional proposition, for example, *ei, eiper* [if] is the connector, which is always preposed to the antecedent and has the logical rôle of "promising" [*epangellesthai*] that the consequent follows from it (71). The strict rules governing the choice and ordering of propositional connectors are one aspect of the regimentation of a small fragment of Greek (and, later, Latin) to form a (very limited) logical "dialect," as when disjunctive propositions are defined as constructed out of two disjuncts bound by two slightly different forms of the connector *either/or*, always used

in the same order (71; *cf.* Apollonius, *coni.* 220.23–221.1). Ancient logicians did not devise formal languages as their modern counterparts do, and instead Stoics defined permissible structures for both simple and non-simple propositions, the goal being to identify a restricted set of vocalizations that would allow any underlying *lekta* to show through clearly and unambiguously, in order to test the validity of arguments.

Making sense of Stoic semantics is complicated by the absence not only of first-hand sources, but also of a precise, rigorous semantic terminology—a failing continued by the technical grammarians. We have seen that an appellative and a verb "signify" while a proper name "indicates" something; connectors "promise" that something is the case, but Posidonius argued that they "indicate" (Apollonius, *coni.* 214.7–13). Also used was the verb *sussêmainen* [signify alongside], while when Chrysippus is reported to have said that certain privatives "signify simple absence, but also a sort of additional suggestion [*par-emphasis*]" that it is habitual (Simp. *cats.* 394.31–395.1, 8–19, following Iamblichus) he uses a nominal cognate with a group of verbs frequent in Stoic sources.

Unlike Aristotle, who considered such things as oaths and commands irrelevant to logic (*Poetics* 1456b), Stoic logicians did study complete *lekta* of this kind (e.g. DL 7.66–8; Ammonius, *int.* 2.26–3.6); we know that Chrysippus puzzled over both conditional and disjunctive commands (*Logical questions* [*PHerc.* 307] cols. 11–13). What is sometimes called Stoic "speech act" theory is unlike its standard modern counterpart in not proposing a single "propositional content" towards which various pragmatic stances might be adopted; the absence of a truth-theoretic semantics is a factor here, of course. Once more, our information is sadly limited. For example, we do not know how far the forms of words (e.g. imperatival forms of verbs) contributed to definitions of each kind (e.g. commands).

Epicureans are said to have rejected dialectic altogether—or most of it: epistemology did have its counterpart in Epicurean "canonic" (DL 10.31; Seneca, *Ep.* 89.11). Accordingly, the school's teaching about logic and language is scattered amongst a variety of topics. Thus, a first-generation Epicurean, Colotes of Lampsacus, criticized a rough contemporary of his (late fourth to early third century BCE), Stilpo of Megara, who argued that non-identical predication is not possible (one may say a general is a general, but not that a general is good). We know this only because, over 300 years later, Plutarch of Chaeronea, a Platonist philosopher who served as an official of the cult of Apollo at Delphi, thought Colotes' book still worth attacking (*Adv. Col.* 1119C-F). Plutarch's chief complaint is that the Epicureans had made what he considered ordinary life impossible: not only had they rejected much of traditional religion, including cult practices and names (such as "Demeter the Lawgiver"), but their elimination of *lekta*, which "give *logos* its being," had also uprooted teaching and learning, anticipations, thoughts, impulses, and assents.

Here Plutarch's ridicule of Colotes rests on a Stoic theory—one developed after Colotes' time, presumably in the third century BCE—that he has posited without defending it; but his claim does raise the question of how Epicureans (materialists, like the Stoics) explained linguistic communication and the contents of thoughts. Intentionality seems to have been assumed as an intrinsic feature of at least some psychological states and vocalizations, as we saw in Lucretius' account of the invention of names and in Epicurus' appeal in the same context to representational states, from which more stable mental representations of objects and their properties may naturally arise (cf. DL 10.32; Sextus, *M* 9.393–401), called "conceptions" [*ennoiai, epinoiai*] in Greek and "notions" [*notitiae*] by Lucretius (4.473–7).

Another type of source for Epicurean thinking about language are methodological texts such as a brief passage near the start of Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus*. This passage is a controversial one, and I do not claim to be offering the only possible interpretation of it.

Epicurus advises first that "one has to have grasped the things subordinated [*hupotetagmena*] to speech-sounds [*phthongoi*]." "Subordinates" must function as our reference-points for "things inquired into, believed, or puzzled over," or our proofs will never reach a conclusion, and our "vocalizations will be empty [*mataious*]." (Both "subordinate" and "empty" became distinctively Epicurean expressions.) Other sources indicate that subordinates comprise both things in the world and their properties (*cf. PH* 2.212; Cic. *De Fin.* 2.6), and also intentional states: Epicurus himself talks of false beliefs being subordinated to linguistic expressions (*On nature* 28, fr. 13 VII 4 p50 Sedley, *cf.* fr. 6 I 11 p40), falsehood being associated with belief in particular at *Ep. Hdt.* 50–1, while Cicero wonders which *sententia*, "opinion," according to Epicurus, should be subordinated to the vocalization *honestas* (his rendering of the Greek *aretê* [virtue]) (*fin.* 2.48).

Hence the other sort of item mentioned as a reference point at *Ep. Hdt.* 37–8, the "primary thought-object" [*prôton ennoêma*] that is associated with a vocal sound, may be interpreted either as different from "subordinates" (if these are externals) or as identical with them (if subordinates are mental items). The "primary thought-object" has generally been identified with a certain kind of epistemologically privileged conception called a *prolêpsis* or "anticipation," although here Epicurus does not use the word (which he invented: cf. Cicero, *On the nature of the gods* [*nat.deor.*] 1.44). The anticipation would certainly have "no need of proof" (38), and is explicitly a reference point for inquiry in 72. In one source, commonly cited but not necessarily reliable, possession of an anticipation is made a necessary condition for (correct) use of names (DL 10.33). If an anticipation fixes the basic or core "subordinates" of a vocal sound, the latter would surely be left "empty"—lacking in reference—without them.

But what little we know of the Epicurean theory of reference and meaning is not reassuring. To account for our ability to talk about past events, Lucretius supplies a still-existing body or location of which the past state-of-affairs is a (separable) property, an *euentum* (cf. 1.445–58), on the grounds that without bodies and locations those past events could never have happened (464–83). We may contrast this crude intentionalist account with a theory—probably Stoic—according to which there are "inflections," *enkliseis*, for tense of present-tense propositions (Alexander, *in Ar. an. pr* 403.14–18). Again, Epicurus' realist way of thinking about predication breaks down when the predication is a fiction (*cf. Ep. Hdt.* 72, *Ep. Men.* 123; also Lucretius, 5.1183–93). In contrast, Stoics made falsehood a property of a proposition that has the appropriate structure to represent a given state-of-affairs whether it obtains or not. Epicureans may have thought of nominals, and perhaps verbs too, as calling to mind shared concepts of objects (again, DL 10.33 is generally interpreted in this way), but this cannot explain how such complex thoughts as "If the gods are rational, they are anthropomorphic" (Cic. *DND* 1.46–7) are communicated or even formulated.

A recourse to built-in mental faculties is characteristic of older strongly empirical theorists; the Epicureans may have an alternative, however—to deny that they had any obligation to explain anything about language that did not bear on the pursuit of happiness or the successful promulgation of Epicurean doctrine. The school's emphasis on the supremacy of ethics over natural philosophy is well known (*cf.* Epicurus, *KD* 11–13, *Ep. Pyth.* 85), and the same may hold for anything but the basic tenet of their canonic, that falsehood can attach only to belief, never to perception (*Ep. Hdt.* 52). The Epicureans are said to have rejected dialectic in its entirety as "redundant": "the sounds [*phthongoi*] of things are an adequate guide for the natural philosopher" (DL 10.31; *cf.* Cic. *Lucullus* 97). Similarly, Cicero's Epicurean spokesman Torquatus (*De Fin.* 1.63) claims that Epicurus thought dialectic made no contribution either to living a better life or to becoming a better language-

user. It is not dialectic, he goes on, but natural philosophy that teaches us "the force [*uis*] of words, and the nature of discourse [*oratio*], and the rational principle [*ratio*] applicable to things that either follow from others, or contradict them," and which is responsible for making us happier by eliminating superstitious terrors and the fear of death. It is in keeping with this focus that what Colotes objected to in Stilpo's thesis about predication was not some logical defect, but that it makes ordinary life impossible (*Adv.Col.* 1119CD).

Language, Philosophy, and Education

The attack on Stilpo came in what was probably a "popular" work by Colotes, intended to persuade outsiders of the merits of Epicureanism by demolishing its rivals. It is unusual for Epicurean treatises in being framed in a lively, vivid style, and in being dedicated to a king (probably Ptolemy II Philadelphus) and made available for copying at booksellers (the ancient equivalent of "publication"). In general, we may think of the discourse adopted by the Hellenistic schools of philosophy as varying according as the school faced inward, towards its own members, or outward, toward other philosophers and the educated public, especially prospective pupils or converts. Unfortunately, once again a dearth of first-hand philosophical sources clouds our view of what was a crucial period of transition in the study and teaching of language.

Social, political, and economic shifts in the wake of Alexander the Great's conquests brought about changes in the Greek language and in how it was taught, as the culture and educational ideals of Greece spread into what had previously been non-Greek speaking areas throughout the Near and Middle East. Speakers of the new "common" [*koinê*] variety of Greek needed specialized teachers not only of the basic skills of reading and writing, but also of more advanced composition, as well as of reading and interpreting texts written in the "literary" dialects in Archaic and Classical texts, which formed the first stage in a liberal education [*paideia*]. Its second stage was provided by teachers of rhetoric (familiar figures since the fifth century BCE) who prepared boys from wealthier or more genteel families for public life, or simply gave them the *entrée* into the higher echelons of society, with all that meant for the maintenance or further accrual of wealth and prestige.

We are told that Stoics had little or nothing to contribute to textual criticism (Apollonius Dyscolus, *coni.* 213.11–14). By contrast, and perhaps surprisingly, the discipline of philology was accepted as useful by Epicureans, if put to the right end: determining which works by the school's Founders were genuine, and furnishing a correct text of these. Thus Demetrius Lacon (late second, early first century BCE), in a work devoted to textual and exegetical puzzles in Epicurus' works, reports that his contemporary Zeno of Sidon (Philodemus' teacher) posited scribal errors to explain away some interpretative difficulties (*Aporiai* [*PHerc.* 1012] cols. 44, 50.5–6). This interest in textual criticism may be the result of the school's wide geographical distribution since early in its history: adherence to an agreed set of doctrines enshrined in an agreed corpus of texts may have provided an alternative basis for school identity to life in a single community in a single location.

By contrast, Stoic dialectic had a profound influence on "technical" grammar, one task of which was determining which word-forms and combinations of word-forms, especially in the literary dialects of Greek (and, later, Latin too), were to count as "correct." What made it "technical"—that is, an expertise or *tekhnê,* a rule-governed, teachable discipline—was its adherence to a set (optimally, a system) of rules by which *Hellenismos* (and, later, *Latinitas*) could be delimited. For example, Apollonius Dyscolus adapted the basic Stoic distinction we met before between vocalisation and signified content to define "correctness," and his conception of sentences as basically left-to-right strings of word-forms (on each of which

something "intelligible" is subsistent), just as a word is a left-to-right string of letter-sounds (cf. *synt.* 1.2, 2.8–3.2; for a striking example, see *coni*. 214.20–25) may also reflect the influence of Stoic linguistic theory.

Stoics, as we saw above, included rhetoric as part of the logical division of their teaching (DL 7.42–3), which is consonant with their political philosophy (cf. 122; also Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.* 1034B, from Chrysippus' *On rhetoric*). The brief summary of rhetoric at DL 7.42–3 is, on the whole, rather conventional (cf. Quintilian, *Teachings in rhetoric* [*inst.rh.*] 3.4.12ff., 3.3.1). But the Stoic version of excellence in oratory came in for severe criticism. Cicero's Crassus dismisses Stoic orators, despite their evident skill and subtlety in argument, on the grounds that not only is their ethical theory too austere for public consumption, but their language, is "thin, unfamiliar, at odds with the listening public, obscure, empty, hollow" (*De Or.* 3.65–6; cf. 2.159, *Brutus* 118–19). Chrysippus' and Cleanthes' works on rhetoric are all very well—if your goal is to fall silent (*De Fin.* 4.7). The key point is that the Stoics proposed the same sort of language for the dialectician and the public speaker. Significantly, stylistics was dealt with in the "vocalisation" division of Stoic dialectic (DL 7.59), nothing being said about *rhetorical* style(s) or about fitting styles to different circumstances (cf. e.g. *De Or.* 122). Especially telling is Zeno's famous demonstration of the difference between dialectic as being like a fist and rhetoric an open hand (e.g. *M* 2.7), as if the only distinction lies in their treatment—rigorous vs relaxed—of the same elements, arguments (cf. Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.* 1035F-1037B for Chrysippus' ideas about "arguing both sides," and 1034E for Zeno's typically controversial take on the issue).

Epicureans, by contrast, who tended to eschew participation in public life and hence in both civic and forensic discourse, neither taught rhetoric nor recommended learning it. Their internal disagreement as to whether rhetoric is an expertise concerned, not what instruction the school should offer, but whether any type of rhetoric could be taught at all (Philodemus, *On rhetoric* [*rh.*] 2a [*PHerc.* 1674] col. 38.2–18 Blank)—which means, in short, that Epicureans were challenging the viability of êlite education. Epicureans decreed that "the wise man will not be a good orator" (DL 10.118) or "deliver encomia," although he will write prose works [*sungrammata*] (120) and go to court (120a). Epicurus himself advised avoiding the whole of *paideia* (6), which of course included rhetoric, and called his new students "blessed," "because you have set out for philosophy undefiled by any *paideia*" (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 13.588A; cf. Cic. *De Fin*. 1.72). Plutarch wittily notes that the Epicureans, who prefer their own company to any political community, "write about the state so that we may not become statesmen, and about rhetoric so that we may not practise oratory" (*Adv.Col.* 1127A). It is safe to assume that prospective students of rhetoric did not read Philodemus' *On rhetoric*—an erudite and closely-argued treatise in at least eight books—and then abandon their studies. But students of *Epicureanism*, under a philosopher's supervision, might come to understand how their traditional education had misled them, both as to what could be taught, and also as to what was worth learning.

The fullest version of the school's rejection of rhetoric to survive comes from Philodemus of Gadara's *On rhetoric* (first century BCE), which survives, like all his philosophical works, only in the papyrus rolls found in the Herculaneum library (the catalogue number of each is added in square brackets). Books 1–3 argue that, while encomiastic rhetoric is indeed an expertise, forensic and deliberative "rhetoric" are so called in name only (*rh.* 2a [1674] 58.4–15 Longo), and that encomiastic cannot teach success in those other two fields—in fact nothing and no-one can. Learning to persuade groups of people can be done only by "experience" [*peira*] and "practice" [*tribê*] (*rh.* 2a

[1674] 35.10–20 Blank). Political rhetoric is unmethodical (*rh.* 2a [1674] 27.4–15 Blank), and at best is practical experience in determining what will benefit the mass of people; but it cannot make ethical judgements about what will bring one happiness (*rh*. 2b. [1672] 21.36–22.25 Blank). Here Philodemus has in view Diogenes of Babylon and the atomist Nausiphanes, who had taught Epicurus, was himself a renowned orator, and had claimed that mastery of natural philosophy is the key to political success—a position Philodemus ridicules, calling on a work on the topic by the Founder Metrodorus for support. Philodemus regularly invokes the support of the Founders for his views, going so far as to call those who disagree "not far from parricides" (*rh.* 1 [1427] col. 7.9–29 Nicolardi = fr. 35 Longo 1988). As for rhetoric generally, Philodemus' position is plain: it is not merely useless, but noxious.

As for stylistics, Philodemus insists that there is only one naturally beautiful sort of *logos*, and whatever guidelines there are for constructing it are natural too, not the rhetoricians' *themata* or "imposed rules" (*rh*. 4.1 [1423] 8.6–22 Gaines = col. VII Sudhaus), which Philodemus attacks in Book 6 [1669]. Encomiastic is obsessed with stylistic refinements (*rh.* 2a [1674] 11.11ff., citing Epicurus; cf. Cic. *De or.* 3.54–5, Quint. *inst.rh.* 12.1.1ff.)—the sort of thing that would see an orator laughed out of court or an assembly (*rh.* 3 [1506] 50.7–52.24 = [1426] 2.25–5.6 pp. 26–31 Hammerstaedt)—and not with achieving clarity, the supreme Epicurean stylistic virtue (*rh.* 4a [1423] 15.6–24, 1.147–8 Sudhaus). A later source (late fourth, early fifth century CE) does report that Epicurus in his own *On rhetoric* had claimed that he alone had discovered the expertise of making political speeches. But the report goes on, apparently quoting Epicurus: "in a way contradicting himself, he states that 'it is nature that makes *logoi* correct, not expertise'" (Syrianus, *Commentary on Hermogenes' "On rhetorical styles"* 4.23–5.7).

The Epicureans' rejection of the high value placed on cultivated, élite language does not mean that there was always agreement between their teaching and ordinary people's ideas as manifested in everyday language, and in general we should not think of Epicurus as "the plain man's philosopher." An outstanding example of this is the sharp line Epicurus draws between "our self-evident knowledge of god" as a blessed, eternal living thing and what the many assume and assert god to be, attaching to him certain properties he does not possess (*Ep. Men.* 123–4; cf. Lucretius *DRN* 5.1183–93, 6.50–78), even though Epicurus' "common conception [*noêsis*]" of god, the Epicurean anticipation of him, is narrow and austere (Cic. *DND* 1.45). Plutarch has a similar criticism of the Epicurean "bait and switch" with regard to god. Epicureans "refuse to call god god, or believe he is god" (*Adv. Col.* 1119DE)—that is, on the old understanding of what a god is—and they "strip the gods of the appellations [*prosêgoriai*] conjoined with them, and along with them they do away with sacrifices, mysteries, processions, festivals." This, Plutarch complains, is one of Epicurus' "habits," that of refusing to acknowledge the unwelcome consequences of his assumptions (1111BC, cf. 1112C). Plutarch's other criticisms of the Epicureans show that he is acutely sensitive to their use, or abuse, of language (cf. e.g. 1112F-1113A, 1118E, 1121A). Epicurus' major epistemological work, the *Kanônes* ("Yard-sticks") is described sarcastically as "god-sent" by Plutarch (1118A; cf. Cic. *De Fin.* 1.63, *DND* 1.43). Another important inconsistency is criticized by Cicero: "what no-one has ever called pleasure [*viz*., freedom from pain], Epicurus calls pleasure; what are really two things, he makes into one" (*De Fin.* 2.30). The problem is that Epicurus "does not understand what this vocalization "pleasure" is a sound of, that is, what thing is subordinate to this vocalization" (6; note the carefully styled Epicurean language, and cf. 2.48 on term *honestas*, a passage we met earlier).

The Epicureans took on the Stoics over another element in traditional education: poetry. Since in antiquity poetry was commonly sung, music too became a matter of controversy. The psychological effects, good or bad, of different harmonies, melodies, and rhythms, especially on the young, had been debated at least since Plato (*Republic* Books 2, 3 and *Laws* Books 2, 7, 8). As reported in his *On music [mus.]* 4, Philodemus' opponent Diogenes of Babylon argues that music can mold the character of children and modify behavior by soothing or stimulating (146.30–147.11 Delattre). Despite Epicurean hostility to *paideia* "as contributing nothing to making wisdom complete" (*M* 1.1), we are told that the wise man is the only one who can discourse correctly about music and poetry (DL 10.121)—but his views would be highly unorthodox. Music can be enjoyable (in Epicurean terms, a "kinetic" pleasure), but it is important not to devote time and energy to it better spent on philosophy, and in any case what affects the mind and its emotional responses is the verbal content of a poem (Philodemus, *mus*. 4 [1497], 151.8ff.), a position that appears to assume a necessary connection between intelligible content and language, despite indications to the contrary in other texts, as we have seen. Epicureans did not necessarily share the Stoic view that emotions are purely judgements of a kind (*cf.* e.g. Plut. *On moral virtue* 446E-447A), but they did assign emotional states a cognitive component (cf. e.g. Philodemus, *On anger* xxxvii 32-xxxviii 10 Indelli). Music, being merely a kind of sound, cannot educate the mind: sound is perceptible, and perception [*aisthêsis*] is irrational (*mus*. 4, 120.2ff., 128.4–129.15; cf. e.g. DL 10.32). Against this, the Stoics argued that there is in fact a kind of "scientific" [*epistêmonikê*] perception, cultivated by experts who see or hear things laypersons are unable to appreciate (116.5–117.23); an ethical debate is thus motivated in part by two very different epistemologies.

Poetry itself, Philodemus asserts, can be judged by a natural criterion in the shape of our anticipations of good and bad verse (*On poems* 5 [1425] xxx 25–33 Mangoni). It should aim to communicate what is beneficial in language that is neither too high nor too low (xxv 30-xxvi 20). This distinctly modest ambition contrasts sharply with Cleanthes' praise of the power of poetry: "just as our breath produces a clearer sound" when channeled through a trumpet, "so the demanding constraint of poetry make our senses clearer" (*Ep.* 108.7–12). Cleanthes' own *Hymn to Zeus* (Stobaeus, *Anthology* 1.1.12) is a remarkable tribute to this poetic vision. But Cicero's Velleius criticizes Cleanthes' god as quite unlike the god captured in our anticipation of him (*DND* 1.37). Finally, therefore, we come full circle to re-examine the way in which Stoics used etymology to interpret poetry. The Stoic view is summarized by the first century CE Stoic Cornutus in the work usually referred to as *On the nature of the gods* [*nat.deor.*]: "The ancients were able to understand the nature of the universe, and were disposed to do philosophy through symbols and riddles" (76.2–5); thus Hesiod, for one, is guilty of adding material "in a more mythic style" to the genealogies he had inherited, "which is how most of the ancient theology too got corrupted" (31.12–18).

The stories of the poets, especially their genealogies of the gods, are to be read as sources for this ancient wisdom, a primitive "theory" of the cosmos framed in the striking and memorable language of symbols, or, as Cicero's Stoic spokesman Balbus explains, "a not unsophisticated explanation in natural philosophy has been wrapped up inside blasphemous folktales" (*DND* 2.64). One way of unwrapping it was through etymology. The very word "religious," Balbus tells us, reveals that these earlier reformers "went carefully over everything that bears on the worship of the gods, and so to say re-read it [*relegerunt*], and hence are called *religiosi*, from 're-reading' [*relegendo*]" (72). As for the names of the gods, "Jupiter" (or "Iuppiter"), for example, is *iuuans pater* [father who helps us] (64). More ambitiously, Cleanthes explained an epithet of Zeus in terms of Stoic philosophical theory

(Plutarch, *On how young men should listen to poets* 31D). Although the author himself is skeptical of such philology, this passage begins with the injunction "not to listen to names carelessly" (31E-F). Similarly, Cornutus warns his reader "not to mix up myths together, and not to transfer names from one to another," unlike those "who do not understand what the genealogies of the gods hint at" (*DND* 27.19–28.2). Chrysippus' subtle and complex re-reading of the well-known story of Athena, goddess of wisdom and technical knowledge, being born from the forehead of Zeus turns the usual story on its head, so to say, by focusing, not on not how *logos* makes its way out, but on its source (Galen, *PHP* 3.8.1–28)—an interpretation that agrees, Chrysippus says, with the way we say "some people swallow [*katapinein*] things said," to store them up inside themselves (16). It is entirely fitting that this myth about *logos* should be one of their most informative and insightful creations—provided you know how to extract it from its poetic trappings—for it was created by people more sensitive than ourselves to the supreme *logos* that permeates the universe like a sort of background radiation. Zeno's books of *Homeric Problems* (DL 7.4) and Chrysippus' works on poems (200) may well have dealt with both interpretation and questions of philology (as with Chrysippus' interventions on the text of Homer, Scholia vol. 1, p265.26 Dindorf, vol. 2 p375 Erbse). But poetry had real, if limited, philosophical value as the main source of myths, divine names, and epithets, which could then be re-interpreted in the light of Stoic doctrine.

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21

FREE WILL AND FATE IN CARNEADES' ACADEMIC SKEPTICISM

James Allen

Carneades of Cyrene (214–129/28 BCE) became scholarch or head of the Academy during its skeptical phase, dubbed the "New Academy" to distinguish it from the "Old Academy" of Plato, the founder of the school, and his immediate successors. The New Academy devoted the largest share of its energies to challenging the positions of other schools, chiefly the Stoics', rather than expounding views of its own. For this reason, many, according to some scholars all, of the New Academics' arguments lend themselves to a dialectical interpretation. When an argument is dialectical in this sense it is not from premises, and need not lead to conclusions, endorsed by its authors, but is instead intended to expose difficulties in the opponents' position, e.g., by showing those opponents on grounds that are compelling to them that their position had unwelcome consequences or that there were defensible, possibly superior, alternatives to it that they were not in a position to reject. To this end, Carneades, who was a master dialectician in this sense, was capable of defending inconsistent positions about the same issue or constructing a position that was his in the sense of being his invention without necessarily being his in the sense that he endorsed it. His theory of probable or persuasive impressions is a case in point.

The sources on which we must rely for our knowledge of Carneades are another ground for caution. Like Arcesilaus (315/4–241/40 BCE), the first New Academic, and Socrates (469–399 BCE) before him, he wrote nothing, but made his mark through face-to-face teaching and argument. His student and eventual successor, Clitomachus (187/6–110/9 BCE) wrote prolifically about his teacher, and his books and those by other Academic contemporaries of Carneades, together perhaps with an oral tradition in the Academy, are our ultimate source. None of these books has survived. Instead we rely on later authors, especially Cicero (106–43 BCE), the Roman statesman and philosophical author, who was himself an adherent of the New Academy. Our principal source for the Hellenistic debates about the cluster of issues surrounding fate is Cicero's *De fato* (*De Fat.*), which also contains just about everything we know about Carneades' contribution to the debate. The text of the *De fato* that has come down to us is incomplete; we lack the beginning and the end, and there are lacunae (gaps) in the part that has survived.[1]

In view of the intrinsic importance of the subject and its prominence in Hellenistic philosophy, it is not surprising that Carneades should have tackled these issues. He confronts two sets of opponents: Epicurus (341–271 BCE) and the Epicureans, on the one hand, and

the Stoics, above all Chrysippus (c. 280–206 BCE), the third scholarch of the Stoa and the figure most responsible for the elaboration and defense of the Stoic philosophical system, on the other. The Stoics hold that everything that comes about comes about by fate. Epicurus and his followers reject fate. Epicurus did not argue against the Stoics himself, but objects to a view already current in his time—he speaks of the despotic fate introduced by some philosophers—that has some of the same implications as the Stoic view (*Ep. Men.* 133 = LS 20 A). Carneades directs searching criticisms against both positions. Though it is possible that his arguments were adapted to different contexts of argument, they suggest a consistent alternative to both Stoic and Epicurean positions. Cicero is sympathetic to Carneades' position; we need not decide whether its author endorsed it *in propria persona*.

According to the Stoics, fate is "the ordered series of causes, when cause joined to cause gives rise to each thing, flowing ceaselessly from all eternity" (Cicero *De Div.* I 125, cf. Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 7.2.1–3 = LS 55 K).[2] To hold that all things come about by fate, as they do, is to hold that every event is the effect of antecedent causes sufficient to bring it about (cf. *De Fat.* 31, 40). Sometimes Cicero speaks of all things coming about by antecedent causes, where we should understand him to mean by antecedent causes sufficient to bring them about, and speaks of denying that an event has antecedent causes or says it has no antecedent causes, where we should understand "antecedent causes sufficient to bring it about" (e.g., *De Fat.* 23). To hold that all things come about by fate is to hold that events are pre-determined. The Stoics are determinists whose position has many of the features expected of determinism:

> because everything comes about by fate … if there were a mortal who grasped the interconnection of all the causes in his mind, no future event would escape him, as he who grasps the causes of what will be of necessity grasps everything that will be.
>
> (*De Div.* I 127 = LS 55 0)

Their commitment to fate is entangled with other important doctrines of theirs, e.g. their belief in divination. The divine reason governing the cosmos, which does have this knowledge according to them, has so ordered the world that there are signs of future events that can be detected by our more limited human intellects.

Perhaps the main reason why so much importance was attached to the study of fate was its relation to questions about voluntary action and moral responsibility, which in turn are connected to issues about the legitimacy of praise or blame and punishment or reward (cf. *De Fat.* 40). In the ancient debate, voluntary actions are said to be "up to us" or to be "in our power" or such that we are free to do them. Cases of voluntary action, in which we could in some sense have done otherwise, are distinguished from cases of involuntary action in which the agent could not, in the same sense, have done otherwise, paradigm examples of which include episodes of being overcome by an irresistible physical force. An action that is *prima facie* worthy of blame is excused if it is involuntary. Blame or punishment that would have been in order in cases of voluntary action is illegitimate. These issues had already been discussed by Aristotle (*NE* 3.1).

The problem once the issue of determinism has been explicitly raised is plain. It would seem that if everything comes about by fate, and therefore all events, including human beings' actions, are pre-determined, then every action of ours without exception is involuntary. From this it follows that there is no scope for blame or punishment, a consequence which no participant in the debate was prepared to accept. Epicurus and his followers accept the implication (Implication 1):

1 If everything comes about by fate, then no action is voluntary or up to us.

Chrysippus and the Stoics reject it. In order to defend the voluntariness of action, and the practices of praise and blame, punishment and reward, the Epicureans must reject fate; the Stoics can endorse fate without, as they think, sacrificing the voluntary.

The Stoic position is the first explicitly articulated version of compatibilism, according to which causal determinism is compatible with taking some of our actions to be voluntary and holding us responsible for them. Very roughly speaking, we can distinguish between two ways of understanding the statement "I could not have done otherwise." According to the first, it means that no one placed in the same circumstances, i.e., in a situation in which the same or relevantly similar external antecedent causes are operative—external that is to the mind or self—could have done otherwise. According to the second, I could not have done otherwise given the totality of causes, not excepting those internal to my character, though someone else, with different motives or deliberative capacities, e.g., since we are usually concerned with blame and fault, a better person than I am, would have behaved differently in the same circumstances. For an action to count as involuntary for compatibilists like the Stoics, it is not enough that agents could not have done otherwise in the second way, with all the relevant causes external and internal alike taken into account; it would have to be that they could not have done otherwise in the first way. Chrysippus illustrates the point with his famous analogy to the cone and the cylinder. The same external push sets the two in motion, but their motions will be different owing to differences in their internal character (*De Fat.* 42–3 = LS 62 C; Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 7.2.11 = LS 62 D).

The existence of fate was entangled with another issue in the ancient debate, however. Ancient philosophers also worried that the voluntariness of human action was threatened by *logical determinism*. Two fundamental principles of logic figure in the argument. The principle of excluded middle holds that of any pair of contradictory propositions, P and not-P, one must be true, the other false. The principle of bivalence, which might seem to be entailed by it, holds that every proposition P is either true or false. But if there is a future tense proposition predicting every future event—never mind whether it is ever formulated or expressed—true at times prior to the event, it seems that the future is settled—from all eternity as Cicero likes to put it. And if this is so, it might seem that it is not possible for the event not to occur and that it is necessary that it occur, therefore that no future action is up to us or voluntary. Aristotle had already wrestled with this problem in *De interpretatione* 9, though it is not clear whether participants in the Hellenistic debate were familiar with his arguments.

To be sure, a purely logical argument for the pre-determination of future events is possible. Aristotle's discussion in the *De interpretatione* does not rely on causation, and the *De fato* may contain hints of such an argument (21, 29). But the main line of argument as described by Cicero assumes an intimate connection between logical and causal determinism: bivalence entails fate.

0. If every proposition is true or false, then everything that comes about comes about by fate.

This implication draws its support from the conviction that the truth of a proposition at a time depends on the state of the world at that time and that the facts about the world relevant to the truth of a future tense prediction must concern the existence of causes sufficient to bring about the predicted event. Note that the argument also lends support to the

converse implication by assuming that the only possible sufficient condition for bivalence is that everything comes about by fate. Chrysippus accepts the implication, and he uses it to argue for fate (*De Fat.* 21–21; cf. 19, 26, 32; *De Div.* I 125). And it appears that Epicurus and his followers accepted it as well. In response to the question, "why can't it be true that every proposition is true or false unless we grant that everything that takes place does so by fate?" Cicero replies "because *he* says things that will be cannot be true which do not have causes because of which they will be" (*De Fat.* 26). The "he" is usually thought to be Chrysippus, but the context points to Epicurus (see Sedley 2005).

Parties that accept both implications and affirm bivalence must reject the possibility of voluntary action:

0. If every proposition is true or false, then everything that comes about comes about by fate.
1. If everything comes about by fate, then no action is voluntary or up to us.

Faced with this prospect, the Stoics and Epicureans respond in different ways. Because they reject Implication 1, the Stoics can endorse Implication 0 and the principle of bivalence without, they believe, endangering the voluntary. Because they endorse both implications, Epicurus and Epicureans abandon bivalence into order to rescue the voluntary. Cicero's account of the matter suggests that there was a certain amount of debate within the Epicurean school. According to him, they originally rejected the principle of excluded middle, but were too embarrassed to persist, so ended by accepting it while rejecting bivalence, a move which Cicero describes as the height of folly (*De Fat.* 37 = LS 20 H). In any event, this move frees them to reject fate, which they did by introducing the notorious swerve, an alteration in the course of the atoms (*De Fat.* 21–2; on the swerve, cf. Lucretius *DRN* 2. 251–93 = LS 20 F).

Carneades' first and most notable contribution to the debate was to argue that bivalence and causal determination were separate issues. One could accept bivalence without committing oneself to causal determinism. As a result, the Stoics were not entitled to infer that everything comes about by fate from bivalence, and the Epicureans were not obliged to reject bivalence because they refused to embrace fate:

> [The proposition] "Epicurus will die after reaching the age of seventy-two in the archontate of Pytharatus" was always true [before his death], nevertheless there were no fatal causes because of which it would happen, but because it so happened, it certainly was to happen just as it did happen.
>
> (*De Fat.* 20; cf. 32–3)

According to Carneades, to say that a true statement about the future cannot become false is not to commit oneself to fate, but simply to explain the meaning of the words employed (*De Fat.* 20; cf. 27–8).

Although Carneades' suggestion freed the Epicureans to postulate the atomic swerve without repudiating fundamental principles of logic, he was himself strongly critical of the swerve.[3] His criticisms, presented by Cicero as friendly suggestions, purport to offer the Epicureans a better way of achieving what is or ought to be most important to them. After Cicero explains that the Epicureans postulated the swerve out of the fear that without it "the mind would be moved in which ever way it was compelled by atomic motions" (21, 22), he continues: "With more acuity, Carneades taught that the Epicureans can defend their cause without the contrivance of the swerve" (23; cf. 47–8). The essential point that he is offering to help the Epicureans uphold

must be the rejection of fate. A few paragraphs earlier, Cicero had said that, loath as he was to reject bivalence along with the Epicureans, he would prefer to suffer this blow before conceding that everything comes about by fate (21). Together with everything else in the context, this suggests that Carneades, followed by Cicero, joined the Epicureans in arguing against fate.

The way Cicero implies that the Epicureans can and should reject motion without cause, which following Carneades he takes to be implied by the swerve, without yielding to Chrysippus is the most serious problem for the interpreter (22, 23). For the view that there is no motion without cause sounds very much like the view of Chrysippus, according to which all events are determined by antecedent causes and come about by fate (*De Fat.* 20; cf. 31). If Carneades' proposal was supposed to allow the Epicureans to say that everything which comes about does so as the result of a cause, it is essential to discover how this is not a concession that everything comes about by fate, i.e., is not in fact a surrender to Chrysippus.

Matters are made more complicated still by the fact, which may however point the way to a solution, that it is unclear how precisely the swerve was supposed to save the voluntary according to the Epicureans and how their use of it was understood by others, which may have been different. Was it intended simply to introduce a break in the chain of causes, so securing a condition presumed necessary for voluntary action? Or was it supposed somehow to constitute or be responsive to the mind's volitions? It is easy to see how, on a plausible interpretation, the swerve would free the mind from the shackles of fate at the cost of placing it at the mercy of utterly random atomic events, making it the plaything of fortune, which would hardly serve to save voluntary action and moral responsibility. Human actions, or some of them, would be in principle inexplicable as anything other than brute products of chance, even though Epicurus himself had distinguished actions that are up to us from both necessary events and those due to chance (*Letter to Menoeceus* 133 = LS 20 A). If this is how motion without a cause is understood in the context and what Carneades wants to avoid, as it seems it is, it may be possible to understand his proposal without supposing that it would commit the Epicureans to fate.

Although Cicero's language refers to motion or change quite generally, the focus is on acts or exercises of the will, volitions—wishing or not wishing to do something (*De Fat.* 24)—and the actions to which they give rise. Carneades first explains what would not be granted and what would not be meant were the Epicureans to accept that there is no motion, in the present case no volition, without a cause (*De Fat.* 23); then, in the next passage, how in a complementary sense one can say truly, if in some contexts misleadingly, that a volition is without a cause (24).

The concession he urges them to make is not dangerous because:

> When [the Epicureans] have conceded that there is no motion without a cause they would not thereby concede that everything that comes about does so by antecedent causes for [they would still hold] that there are no external and antecedent causes of our will.
>
> (23)

As we have already seen, when he speaks of coming about by antecedent causes, he must sometimes mean being fully determined by antecedent causes since there can be no objection to the idea that voluntary actions are occasioned by prior causes, e.g., perceptions or the objects perceived, which are not sufficient by themselves to bring the actions about. All the same, much remains unclear. Is the class of antecedent causes mentioned first here broader than that of external *and* antecedent causes? Are the "causes of our

will" causes of acts of will or volitions, or causes that shape or form the faculty of the will? The context suggests that it is causes of volitions that Cicero has in view. But are these causes restricted to those which, like perceptions, are the proximate occasion for volitions that are the acts of an already formed mind or might they include causes that, through exerting an influence on the formation of the mind, could also be viewed as antecedent causes of its volitions? If they are so restricted, and by "external" Carneades means only causes like perceptions that occasion a volition, and it is determination by them alone that he excludes, then the position that he defends threatens to turn into Chrysippus' compatibilism. For it remains possible that the action is determined by the conjunction of all the relevant causes, external and internal.

The question is not resolved by what Cicero goes on to say when he describes the way in which we can truly say that volitions are—in a way—without a cause (*De Fat.* 24). Just as we may say that a vessel is empty, meaning empty of wine or water, not altogether empty or a vacuum, so we may say that someone wanted something without a cause, meaning not without any cause at all, but without an external and antecedent cause, understanding this to mean as before, without external antecedent causes sufficient to bring the volition about.

But Carneades cannot have meant to agree with Chrysippus, and it must be determination by antecedent causes more broadly understood, as they are in Stoic definitions of fate, that he rejects. The position that he defends, whether for the sake of argument or out of conviction, seems to have been that voluntary acts are caused by the mind, which possesses a certain autonomy. Explanation of what people do with reference to their motives and thoughts is possible after the event. In retrospect we can say why they acted as they did by reference to their character and circumstances: "The outcome reveals its causes" (*De Fat.* 37). But their actions are not pre-determined by a nexus of causes extending through eternity; the state of the world before the agent's volition is not, or not always, sufficient to bring it about; it is not fated.

This is the point Carneades intends to illustrate by comparing the mind and its motions to the atom and its motions. According to Epicurean physics, atoms move downward along straight paths at a constant velocity for eternity unless disturbed by colliding with another atom. Their natural motion is without a cause if we mean a push or pull from without. But this is not to say that it is unqualifiedly without a cause.

> It is the nature of the atom itself to be moved by its weight, which is the very cause of why it is so moved. Likewise no external cause is needed for the voluntary motions of our minds. Voluntary motion itself possesses a nature of such kind that it is in our power and obeys us. Yet it not without cause as the nature itself of the thing is the cause.
>
> (*De Fat.* 25)

It is safe to assume that behind Cicero's talk of the nature of the soul's motion is a conception of the mind's nature, which is the proper analogue or counterpart to the atom's nature. The analogy between the uniform downward motion of the atom and the various and changing volitions of the mind in response to circumstances is somewhat strained. Nevertheless the nature of the mind, our deliberative and desiderative faculties, will, like the atom's weight, explain what the thing whose nature it is does without its doings being predetermined by causes antecedent and external to its actions.

The position dovetails with remarks from an earlier part of the *De fato*, separated by a lacuna from the part from which Carneades' advice to the Epicureans is drawn. Responding to observations about the interconnection of all things offered by Chrysippus in support of

fate, Cicero, likely following Carneades who is not named here, acknowledges that climate and geography exert an influence on character and that different people are predisposed in different ways as a result of what he calls natural and antecedent causes. But he insists that our volitions and the actions to which they give rise are not determined by antecedent causes since, if they were, nothing would be in our power (*De Fat.* 7–9). And he cites the examples of the philosophers Socrates and Stilpo, who overcame their predispositions, to dullness of mind and dissipation respectively, in support of this contention (9–11). That is, regardless of whether the natural and antecedent causes are sufficient to determine a person's character—the issue is not tackled here—they are not, through the influence they exert on its formation, the natural and antecedent causes of the mind's volitions, where this must mean they are not sufficient to bring them about.

The upshot seems to be that it is wrong to say that our voluntary actions are uncaused in the way that they would be on a plausible interpretation of the Epicurean swerve according to which the swerve makes our actions creatures of chance. They are caused by the mind (with the help, of course, of external stimuli). But our minds, though subject in the course of their formation to the influence of precedent causes, are the cause of our volitions and the actions attendant upon them that are not the predetermined effect of the state of the world before we elect to act.

Whether this was Carneades' position in the sense that he adopted it or he defended it only for the sake of argument, it is of a piece with the standpoint from which he criticizes Chrysipuss and the Stoics. This is clear not only from these objections to climatic or geographic determinism, but also from his objections to Chrysippus' answer to the so-called lazy argument (*De Fat.* 28). Supposing that everything comes about by fate, and I am fated to recover from an illness, then I will do so whether or not I consult a doctor. So I need not bother. This is the lazy argument, and it is objectionable, of course, because it is a counsel for inaction. But it also seems, absurdly, to imply, e.g., that if Laius is fated to beget Oedipus, he will do so whether he has lain with a woman or not (*De Fat.* 40). Chrysippus' answer is that if the second event can come about only if the first has and the second is fated, then so is the first; they are co-fated.

According to Cicero, Carneades "disapproved of this kind of argument and preferred to argue in different way" (*De Fat.* 31). This way of putting matters is a trifle obscure, however. Carneades' objection to Chrysippus' argument is not based on support for the lazy argument, which he too will have rejected, nor is the argument Cicero proceeds to expound obviously an alternative refutation of the lazy argument.

Instead it is a frontal attack on the Stoic view that everything comes about by fate. By refuting fate, however, it undermines an essential presupposition of the lazy argument and could, therefore, be regarded as part of an alternative and superior strategy of refutation. Carneades' idea would, then, have been that it is better to attack fate head on than strive in vain to reconcile it with voluntary action.

The argument is as follows:

i If all things come about by antecedent causes, they do so joined and woven together through a natural interconnection [i.e., they come about by fate].
ii But if this is so, necessity brings about all things.
iii If this is true, there is nothing in our power.
iv There is, however, something in our power.
v But if all things come about by fate, all things come about by antecedent causes.
vi Therefore, it is not true that whichever things come about do so by fate.

(*De Fat* 31)

The argument is meant to place pressure on Chrysippus and the Stoics, but there are two points that they will have regarded as highly contentious.

Chrysippus held that a future event may be fated without being necessary (cf. *De Fat.* 13). Something that is not going to happen may yet be possible; therefore, it cannot be necessary that it fail to occur even though it is fated not to happen. Plainly there was scope for dispute about this point, traces of which are preserved by Cicero. But Carneades could have put premise (ii) aside for the sake of argument without weakening his case. Premise (v), which might better have been placed at the head of the argument, and premise (i) yield an equivalence "all things come about by fate if and only if they come about by antecedent causes," for to come about "joined and woven together through a natural interconnection" is to come about by fate. And a case can be made for replacing premise (iii) with another (iii)' asserting that if all things come about by fate or by antecedent causes, then none of our actions are voluntary, setting aside the issue of whether and if so how precisely they are necessary (cf. *De Fat.* 20). This is the implication (Implication 1) that figured in Epicurus' reasoning and the case against it earlier in the *De fato*. If we are in a position to assert that there are voluntary actions, we can still draw the same conclusion, proposition (vi), that it is not the case that whatever comes about comes about by fate.

The second point of contention is more serious. Like premise (iii), premise (iii)' is flatly rejected by the Stoics. Chrysippus understood fate and the voluntary in such a way that they were compatible. It is a reasonable assumption that Carneades had much to say about why he was not entitled to this understanding, but Cicero does not set out his reasons here. Instead he returns to a related point. It does not follow from the fact that future tense predictions are true from all eternity, Cicero maintains, that "all things come about joined and woven together by a natural interconnection," i.e., by fate. The relevance of the point to the context seems to be that Chrysippus and the Stoics are not entitled to appeal to the logical principle of bivalence in support of fate. Cicero proceeds to argue that, though the Stoics were wrong to suppose that bivalence implies that all things come about by fate, they were right to make divine foreknowledge and human divination depend on fate. Carneades' rejection of fate was, then, of a piece with his case against divination, which was another issue to which he gave serious attention (Cicero *De Div.* I 7). According to Cicero, he was accustomed to saying that not even Apollo could predict future events, except those with causes because of which it is necessary that they come about (*De Fat.* 32).

How satisfying Carneades' rejection of both fate and the swerve in favor of a form of autonomous mental causation was, or should be, to philosophers moved by the intuitions behind determinism, as the Stoics and Epicureans were in their different ways, is naturally a difficult question.

Notes

1 The most recent critical edition of the Latin text is Giomini 1975. Sharples 1991 provides a Latin text, English translation and extensive and illuminating commentary. Yon 1950 and Bayer 1963 present a Latin text together with translations into French and German respectively and include helpful notes. The widely available Loeb library has English trans., based in an older Latin text, Rackham 1942. For more on Cicero, see Lockwood's chapter in this volume, "Documenting Hellenistic Philosophy: Cicero as a Source and Philosopher."

2 See Ioppolo's chapter in this volume, "Nature, God, and Determinism in Early Stoicism."

3 For more on the Epicurean swerve, see Németh's chapter in this volume, "Epicureans on Teleology and Freedom."

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22

PIETY AND THEOLOGY IN THE STOICS, EPICUREANS, AND PYRRHONIAN SKEPTICS

Harald Thorsrud

From its beginning, Greek philosophy sought reasoned accounts of the awesome, and sometimes terrifying, natural phenomena that were supposed to have been caused by the gods. With the exception of a few notable atheists, these philosophers sought to explain the gods rather than explain them away. This involved revealing the mistakes of traditional religion and myth while preserving an integral role for the divine in the structure of reality (Runia 2002; Betegh 2006; Boys-Stones 2009; Whitmarsh 2015). Plato and Aristotle, for example, defend the gods by correcting the characterizations of poets like Homer and Hesiod, whose anthropomorphized Olympians were aesthetically ideal but full of lust, envy, and malice. The powerful, meddlesome and unpredictable nature of such gods inspired the impulse to placate them with prayer and offerings when possible and to fear them when not. Plato insists, by contrast, that the gods are good and constant by nature and therefore incapable of deception and evil (*Rep.* 379b–383c); as such, they are not to be feared but imitated (*Tht.* 176a-c; *Tim.* 90a-d; Annas 1999: 52–71). Aristotle similarly argues that the gods are incapable of jealousy (*Metaph.* I 1, 982b29–983a11); engaged in continuous contemplation of eternal truths, they live the best possible lives (*Metaph.* XII 7, 1072b13–30; *NE* X 8, 1178b8–24). And since we have a share in divine reason, we must strive to live the life of the gods as far as we are able by developing and exercising that reason (*NE* X 7, 1177b26–1178a2).

So, despite some important differences, Aristotle follows Plato in establishing the gods as the standard of goodness for all lower forms of life (Sedley 1999). In their wake, the human *telos* comes to be generally accepted among Hellenistic philosophers as becoming like god. And since the wisdom they sought was understood as knowledge of divine and human affairs, all philosophers (with the exception of the skeptics) felt it necessary to offer a rational account of the divine: if we are to become like god, what is god like? What sort of lives do the gods live? What relation do they have to the world and to us? What, if anything, do they demand from us? What do they give us in return? And, how do we know the gods are truly like this? For that matter, how do we know the gods exist in the first place?

In this chapter, we will consider Epicurean and Stoic responses to such questions along with some of Sextus Empiricus' skeptical critiques.[1]

Epicurean Theology

Although Epicurus considered atheism to be a kind of raving madness, he was accused by many of being an atheist himself (Obbink 1989). Yet he emphatically affirmed the existence of the gods, and held that the proper understanding of their nature is essential both in order to eliminate the ungrounded fear of divine malice and to fix in our minds a model of the best possible life.

According to Epicurus, both young and old must study philosophy—i.e. Epicurean philosophy—because it guides us in the practices necessary for freeing ourselves from mental disturbances so we may live tranquil, happy lives (Warren 2009). The first such practice is to believe that god is an indestructible and blessed animal in accordance with the natural, and hence true, conception (DL 10.123). Epicurus' exhortation is not merely to believe that this is true—indeed it seems unlikely that anyone can be commanded to believe something, even if they wish to. The practice is rather a matter of habituating ourselves to interpret the world in accordance with such principles (cf. *SV* 41 = IG I-6). For example, when I think about death, I must apply the Epicurean principle that death is of no concern to me. When I think about some alluring luxury item, I must apply the Epicurean division of desires to see it as unnatural and unnecessary and even imagine the ugliness of the vice I am inclined to commit. And when I entertain some thought about the gods, I must measure it against the true conception identified by Epicurus in order to reject anything incompatible with their indestructibility and blessedness (DL 10.77–8, 123–4, 139; *ND* 1.42–3; Philod., *De Piet.* 1139–50, Obbink 1996). To fail in these exercises leads inevitably to some variety of mental disturbance.

Of course, we must first come to know, or at least believe, these principles before we may apply them. In the case of the gods this should be easy, for Epicurus claims that their nature and existence is self-evident (DL 10.123). This does not mean that everyone will immediately agree—for it may be self-evident without it being self-evident to everyone, especially since our natural conceptions are easily corrupted.

Before examining the epistemic side of Epicurus' theology, let's look more closely at the nature of his gods. All of the divine attributes follow from their indestructibility and blessedness. Since they live the best possible lives and are perfectly tranquil, they must have all the virtues necessary for living such a life; for experience informs us that vice is incompatible with tranquility. Furthermore, since we cannot imagine a happy life lacking the great pleasure of conversation and companionship, we must suppose the gods are able to speak to one another (*M* 9.178). This in turn presupposes that they are rational, and since rationality only appears in human-shaped animals, we must suppose they too exist in human form (*DND* 1.48, cf. 1.98–9).

Accounting for their immortality or indestructibility turns out to be problematic. For Epicurus, all that exists *per se* is matter and void, while composites and their properties exist as accidents. So only atoms are indestructible, whereas composite bodies are brought together and inevitably pulled apart by the same natural forces (DL 10.73–4; *DND* 3.29–35; *M* 9.138–47, *DRN* 3.806–18).[2] Insofar as the gods are composite bodies it seems they too must be subject to dissolution. Epicurus does think that the gods are composed of such fine, delicate particles that they are incapable of being touched, at least by us, and he places them (or rather his later followers place them) in a mysterious realm between worlds, the *intermundia*, to shield them from the destructive forces of our natural world (*DRN* 5.146–155, *DND* 1.18). But it is not clear how the gods' superfine, "quasi-bodies" (*DND* 1.49) protect them from those forces that affect every other sort of composite body.[3]

Regardless of how the gods' permanent existence might be secured, their permanent tranquility requires that they not intervene in, or even be aware of, troublesome human affairs. In fact, the greatest corruption of our natural conception of the gods is to suppose that they intervene in our world, meting out punishments and rewards. Even the more refined Stoic gods who intervene in the world without being moved by anger would be painfully overworked and thus incapable of the tranquility necessary for happiness (*DND* 1.52). So Epicurus believes the gods cannot be burdened with the management, or even the design and construction, of the world. And in any case, they are not needed in this role since we can explain all of the workings of nature strictly in terms of atoms moving through the void in accordance with natural, purposeless forces.

On the other hand, Epicurus argues that if the gods designed and constructed the natural world, we confront absurd consequences and irresolvable puzzles. For one thing, we cannot conceive what motivated perfectly tranquil and self-sufficient beings to bring the universe into existence (*DRN* 5.156–180). What's more, there are countless features of this world that are ill-suited to human flourishing (*DRN* 2.167–82, 5.195–234). And it makes no sense to claim that the gods created this world for all human beings, wise and foolish alike; since fools are miserable their existence brings no real benefit to themselves or anyone else (*DND* 1.23). In general, if the gods are aware of the evil in the world, they would wish to eliminate it. Since there appears to be a great deal of evil, we must conclude that the gods are either not able to eliminate it, and hence weak, or not willing to eliminate it, and hence spiteful. Lactantius, who reports this argument, insists that Epicurus wants us to conclude the gods simply don't care about us (Lactant. *De Ira Dei* 13.20–22 = IG I-109, cp. *PH* 3.9–12). That's right, but it would be a mistake to think this means his gods are spiteful or care for nothing at all. Indeed, they care deeply for their own tranquility, which in turn is incompatible with the painful emotion of spite. Furthermore, they are no more able to cause disturbance or harm to others as they are of suffering disturbance or harm themselves (*DND* 1.45, DL 10.139). Even if they were aware of our day-to-day struggles (which they are not), they would still be unable to directly intervene. But this makes them neither weak nor malicious; their strength and goodness lies in the uninterrupted tranquility of their perfectly blessed lives.

But if the gods have no interest in us and no need of us, if they promise neither punishment nor reward for the character we develop and the actions we perform, why should we be the least bit concerned with them? In particular, why did Epicurus engage in traditional forms of prayer, ritual, and sacrifice, and encourage his friends to do the same? It was not for the sake of avoiding divine hostility or currying divine favor, but rather, first to live in conformity with the law and social norms, and second to more effectively imitate the lives of the gods (*De Piet.* 730–50, 880–96, 2032–60, Obbink 1996).

Worshipping the gods for the sake of conforming to social norms seems suspect, if not downright insincere. The Stoic Posidonius objected that Epicurus didn't really believe in the gods in the first place, and that his theological statements were merely an attempt to prevent persecution. There can be no holiness or piety, Posidonius claims, if the gods have no care for human affairs (*DND* 1.121–4). Epicurean piety, however, is compatible with such divine indifference. It is simply a matter of contemplating the true nature of the gods as the source of only good things (*De Piet.* 105 = IG I-56). Engaging in prayer, sacrifice, and ritual is a way to focus on the blessedness of the gods and the ultimate, natural good of tranquility. Piety is not a matter of prostrating oneself before statues and altars in the hopes of bribing vindictive, or even benevolent, deities. Such toadying is in fact impious as it fails to honor the gods, breeds perpetual fear and insecurity, and makes the tranquil life impossible (DL 10.123–4).

But why should we trust that our supposedly self-evident, natural conception of god is right in the first place? First of all, according to Epicurus, since every human culture espouses religious beliefs, we must infer, as the best explanation, that nature itself imprints the concept of god on all human beings. Given that Epicurus is a staunch empiricist, we should not take him to mean that we are born with a full-blown, clear and distinct concept, but rather we are born with a *disposition* to acquire it. And insofar as this inclination is naturally implanted in us, we may trust that when it is properly actualized the resulting concept accurately reflects reality (*DND* 1.43–44).

There are two competing accounts of how Epicurus thinks this natural inclination is properly actualized, i.e. how we acquire the correct, general conception of god. These two accounts correspond to positions taken in an ongoing dispute as to whether Epicurean gods are merely ideal thought-constructs or independently existing, biological entities.[4] According to the latter, realist view, the mind receives images of the gods in dreams that are caused by superfine films of atoms given off by the gods themselves. These *simulacra* are not intentional messages from the gods, but rather part of the natural environment that conditions our minds and senses, as any good empiricist account of concept formation would insist (DL 10.33). And, according to the realist, there is no other plausible account of how we acquire this concept. We cannot, for example, simply extrapolate from the imperfect goodness and tranquility of human beings to arrive at the perfect tranquility and goodness of the gods. For in order to grasp human goodness as imperfect in the first place presupposes that we already understand the perfected, divine version (*M* 9.43–7).

However, the idealist has a plausible response to this problem by locating the ultimate source of our concept of the gods within our own nature. We may illustrate this by comparison to our natural grasp of the goodness of pleasure. Strictly speaking there is no need for any proof of self-evidently true propositions. How do we know that pleasure is good? Have a taste and you will immediately understand, just as you feel that fire is hot (*De Fin.* 1.30). But when we grasp the self-evident goodness of pleasure, there is no external state of affairs corresponding to the proposition "pleasure is intrinsically good." Rather, the stimulation of our senses causes the experience of pleasure, which we, due to our nature, immediately grasp as good. In the same way, when images of the gods form in our minds, either in dreams or by way of our imagination, we immediately grasp them as perfectly tranquil and immortal. This is an expression of our own natural desire to live perfectly tranquil lives with no fear of death (*M* 9.43–47).

On this idealist view, the gods are human constructs, perceived through our minds rather than our senses (cf. *DND* 1.49). And they are real because as ideas in our mind they are composed of superfine material particles. However, unlike the people or solid objects we interact with, the gods would cease to exist if we completely stopped thinking of them. So, their blessedness and immortality are not literal attributes of independently existing things, but rather part of our conception of what the perfect human life would be. As such, we may avoid the intractable problem of explaining how the composite bodies of the gods are immune to the relentless, natural processes of dissolution. And in the meantime, the more parsimonious thought-construct view of the gods fulfills its therapeutic purpose by eliminating our fear of divine retribution and providing us with a model of a perfectly tranquil and blessedly happy life.

So, was Epicurus an atheist after all? If the idealist reading is correct and we suppose that theism requires an independently existent god, then perhaps he was. But if we suppose, in a more pluralistic vein, that theism only requires that the divine have salvific or transformational power, then he was not. In any case, Epicurus clearly thought the gods really do exist as ethical ideals, and that their nature is fixed by features of reality over which we have no

control. In this sense, the gods play an integral role in the structure of reality, and there are enormously important real-world consequences that flow from our attitudes towards them. To understand and worship the gods as they really are removes all fear of divine retribution, and inspires us to live the ideal life of blessed tranquility.

Stoic Theology

Stoic theology is a striking and bold philosophical enterprise that combines theistic, polytheistic, *and* pantheistic elements within a materialist, determinist cosmology (Baltzly 2003). It also offers a naturalistic, revisionary interpretation of traditional Greek religious belief. And it supports the Stoics' ethical view in important ways.[5] The great Stoic Chrysippus considered the study of theology as a completion or fulfillment of the entire system, comparable to a religious confirmation, and insisted that it be taught last, after students had learned how to understand and properly engage with language and reasoning, human life, and the structure of the world—i.e. after studying logic, ethics, and physics (*Stoic. Rep.* 1035B). Apparently, he meant that theology provides the unifying threads for the entire Stoic system, thereby promoting a more secure grasp of the interconnected truths of all of its parts (see the texts in LS 26).

Disagreements with the Epicureans highlight two of the Stoics' most distinctive features. First, because they held that governing is one of the most exalted rational activities, whereas Epicurean leisure, or idleness, is fit only for spoiled children (*DND* 1.102, 2.76–7), we must conceive of the gods as intimately involved in world events.[6] In this cosmological role, the gods are understood as the fundamental active principle, which explains how and why things come to be and change as they do. As such, the gods are immanent forces—they do not act on the world from outside but from within, being themselves components or aspects of the world. The Stoics also characterize this divine function in terms of fate. Each of the gods' actions occurs strictly in accordance with the laws of nature. They both write the script and perform the play as it were—so we shall have to see what room this leaves for human agency. Second, the Stoics held that the only possible outcome of the gods' active engagement with the world is the orderliness and intelligibility of nature, which in turn expresses their rational, virtuous, providential concern. But, since the gods arrange and sustain the world ultimately for the sake of themselves and their closest kin—rational human beings—they do not care equally for every part, even though they do care for the whole (see the texts in LS 54).

The foundation of both Stoic physics and theology is their characterization of the two basic cosmological principles: that which acts and that which is acted upon (DL 7.134). The latter, passive principle is matter or substance, which the Stoics (following Aristotle) hold to be essentially motionless and shapeless even though it is so only in thought or abstraction. For in reality, matter always has some particular form and is often in motion. In fact, the material world exhibits an extraordinary degree of order and regularity, of both form and motion. In opposition to the Epicureans, the Stoics make the crucial assumption that this order must be the product of something more than blind, purposeless natural forces. Their dismissal of the Epicurean view that order arises from the random collisions of atoms over an infinite expanse of time relies on the intuition that the chance production of order is absurd if not inconceivable (*DND* 2.93; cf. *DND* 2.15).[7]

If we grant this crucial assumption, the only possible cause and explanation for any intelligible disposition of the world is the active principle. One of the Stoics' main argumentative strategies then is to show that to account for some feature of the world, the active principle must have certain characteristics, which turn out to coincide with our natural

preconception of god (cf. Schofield 1983). For example, they appeal to a version of the cosmological argument to explain the fact that things are in motion. Whatever causes this motion must be moved by itself or by something else. The latter option triggers an infinite regress, which is presumably unacceptable because it eliminates the possibility of a complete explanation, in contradiction of the initial assumption. Thus, we may infer that the ultimate cause of motion, the active principle, is itself self-moved. We may also infer that it is eternal since nothing can cause it to begin moving at a particular time (*M* 9.75–6; cf. *DND* 2.32).

The Stoics further observed that heat (which we might also think of as energy) is essential to all living things, and even for the stability of inorganic elements (Aetius 1.7.33 = LS 46A). Accordingly, they characterized the active principle as a designing fire and a kind of breath (*pneuma*) pervading the whole world, generating and sustaining life. But, they argue, since nothing lacking sensation can have a sentient part and the world has sentient parts, the world itself must be sentient. Similarly, since a rational being cannot arise from something lacking reason, and since the world gives rise to rational beings, the world itself is rational (*DND* 2.22; DL 7.134; *M* 9.101–3). Thus, if such properties can only be generated by something that has those properties, we find that the world, in addition to being self-moved and eternal, is animate (ensouled), sentient, and rational.

Another Stoic argumentative strategy relies on the notion that nothing is superior to the world. This in turn may be established by looking to its teleological structure. Every living thing, with the exception of the world itself, relies on something else for its continued existence. Fortunately, the world is arranged in such a way that every kind of living thing has what it needs to survive and flourish: crops for animals to eat, animals for humans to eat and harness, etc. (*DND* 2.154–67). So, with the exception of the world itself, which is completely self-sufficient, everything is made for the sake of something else. But, being self-sufficient and lacking nothing are indications of perfection according to the Stoics. It follows that nothing is superior to the world. And yet, the world contains many things that are rational and virtuous (or at least approximately so). Since we may think of these as great-making features—i.e. something is greater to the extent that it is endowed with reason and has achieved virtue—it follows that the world itself must be not only rational but perfectly virtuous as well. Otherwise, a rational, virtuous human being would be superior to the non-rational, non-virtuous world (*DND* 2.37–9; *M* 9.104–10).

We should note one final Stoic argument since it seems to anticipate Anselm's ontological proof for the existence of god (*M* 9.133–6). Building on Zeno's initial formulation, a later Stoic, Diogenes, claimed that if something is of a nature not to exist, it is not reasonable to honor (or rather, worship) it. But since it is reasonable to honor the gods, it follows that the gods are of a nature to exist. Furthermore, something being of a nature to exist implies that it exists at some time—for that is its nature. Therefore, the gods exist at some time. And since the gods are indestructible, if they existed once they must exist now.

One of the many questions this brief report raises is why something's being of such a nature as to exist implies that the thing actually does exist at some time. If we construe such natural existence as *necessary* existence, we will indeed have an ontological argument; for we will have claimed that god's existence is contained within the very concept. However, in order to secure the inference we may more plausibly understand natural existence as something less stringent than necessary existence, but more robust than merely possible existence. Saying that god is of such a nature as to exist seems to mean that there is nothing in the ordinary course of nature that could prevent god from existing (Brunschwig 1994). It is not true, then, that god's non-existence is inconceivable, as is the case in ontological arguments.[8]

In any case, we may now see that in the singular sense, the Stoic god is an immortal, rational, virtuous, perfectly happy animal whose body comprises the entirety of the material world and whose soul is the active, ruling principle of the entire cosmos (DL 7.147, 7.137). In the plural sense, we may understand the Stoic gods as the various sub-systems of the cosmic animal. So, although the poets were deeply mistaken in portraying the gods with petty human vices and frailties, they were right to honor what is sacred about the seas under the name Poseidon, the fruits of the earth under the name Ceres, etc. (*DND* 2.71). This allowed the Stoics to engage in traditional polytheistic practices as long as they were performed in accordance with the conviction that the gods are virtuous, provident, natural forces (*Ench.* 31; DL 7.119).

However, the identification of god with fate seems to undermine any traditional religious practice aimed at altering the course of nature. Seneca admits that it is futile to expect the gods to be moved by pity or favor, but he allows that we may still comfort ourselves by means of prayer. Furthermore, the desired outcomes may be co-fated to occur along with the relevant prayers (*NQ* 2.35–38). Thus, while we cannot say that our prayers are ever the sole cause of the desired outcome, it still makes sense to offer them up, just as it makes sense for me to seek a physician's help when I am sick; for even though I do not know whether I am fated to recover, I might be fated to recover *as a result* of seeking the physician's help (*De Fat.* 28).

Ultimately, piety demands that we desire and praise the right things. In his *Hymn to Zeus* (LS 54I), Cleanthes criticizes those who lust for fame, wealth, and pleasure and he prays, on behalf of all humanity, that Zeus will dispel these from our souls so that we may achieve the power of the gods' own judgment, which will guarantee that we see only genuinely good things as good. In other words, the only proper Stoic prayer is for the alignment of our desires with the providential course of Nature through understanding the operations of the gods. In fact, the Stoics define piety as knowledge of service to the gods. But since the gods are completely self-sufficient and lack nothing, the only service we can provide is to contribute however we may to realizing the providential order of things. Of course, we must still attain virtue through our own efforts. And this raises, once again, the specter of futility. Insofar as all of my desires, impulses, and actions are determined in accordance with god's cosmic script, I seem to have no real agency. But in that case, nothing I do is ever worthy of praise or blame, which seems to eliminate virtue itself.

The Stoic response is that human action is caused by both external factors that are outside our control and internal factors that are up to us. Chrysippus illustrates this distinction by means of an analogy with a cylinder being pushed down a slope. The initial impetus for the cylinder's motion is like an impression we receive, but its velocity and direction, which is determined by its own shape, is like the assent we give or withhold (*De Fat.* 39–43). The latter is up to us, even though it is an expression of our character. And even though our character is formed as a result of environmental and hereditary factors, and each act of assent is necessarily in accordance with the divine script, from our limited perspective it is inescapably up to us whether we give our assent—in fact it is the only thing truly up to us.

But this is no small matter. It is, in fact, our share of god's nature. Epictetus describes us as particles or detached portions of god, which are unlike all the other parts of god; for unlike plants and other animals, we have the power of using our impressions as we see fit (*Diss.* 2.8.11–14, 1.17.27). Indeed, the Stoics attribute to god the same sort of volition, impulse, and desire that we experience ourselves (*DND* 2.58). The crucial difference is that god exclusively desires the order of events that in fact occur whereas we, feeling ourselves to be deprived if not abused by fortune, frequently wish things would be otherwise. But I may correct this mistake by imagining myself to be like a dog tied to the

back of a cart: I may either trot along happily behind or be dragged (LS 62A, cp. Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.6.9, *Ench.* 53). The Stoics think that all of our unhappiness originates in our refusal to follow along.

Accordingly, they define our ethical end as living in agreement with nature, which is the same as living in accordance with our experience of what happens by nature (DL 7.87–9). God's providence is most apparent in this arrangement, for nothing genuinely good or bad is outside of my control. I can be physically injured or upset but never truly harmed by external events; so I can never experience undeserved suffering. On this view, it seems that the problem of evil cannot even properly arise, for bad things cannot happen to good people if the only genuinely bad thing is self-inflicted vice.

However, since vice is such an unfortunately common feature of human life, and since god desires everything to happen precisely as it does, it would seem to follow that god desires the abundance of vice and the vicious action it inspires. But that would be incompatible with god's virtue and providence. Chrysippus acknowledges that vice is in accordance with fate and god's reason, but claims that it is also in accordance with god's providence (*Stoic. Rep.* 1050C-D). It is not clear whether this claim can be adequately defended. But Cleanthes, in his *Hymn to Zeus,* proposes that vicious actions are the only things that happens apart from god (LS 54I), which might indicate a kind of doctrine of double effect—i.e. god desires only the goodness of the whole cosmos, but not the individual instances of vice that are nonetheless necessary for that goodness to be realized. This would be plausible if, as the Stoics claim, virtue and vice can only exist together in opposition, just as there could be no fortune without misfortune, or pleasure without pain (LS 54Q). Such a claim is certainly convincing with regard to pairs like convex and concave. But if we can coherently imagine a world with nothing but perfectly virtuous agents, the Stoic's divine cosmic animal could have generated better human beings than it did (*DND* 3.79). And in that case, vice was not a necessary part of the world, and the Stoic god will fail to be perfectly virtuous and provident in generating it.

Sextus' Pyrrhonian Critique

Given that Hellenistic philosophy was thought to be the pursuit of wisdom, and wisdom was thought to require knowledge concerning the gods, Sextus' skeptical attack on theology threatens to undermine philosophy itself (*M* 9.13). For if philosophers cannot give a coherent account of their ultimate goal, which includes knowledge concerning the gods, it becomes unclear why we should follow them. Nevertheless, the skeptic may still investigate what the philosophers *think* they are seeking, and what they mean by such terms as "philosophy," "wisdom," and "god."

In keeping with Sextus' standard Pyrrhonian practice, he opposes conflicting arguments and evidence in order to relieve his readers of the inclination to assent to one side or the other. The anticipated outcome is a sort of radical agnosticism. To suspend judgment on theological matters means to have no beliefs whatsoever with regard to the nature and existence of the gods. As a result, we will, or at least may, lose our anxiety about believing correctly, and avoid the risk of impiety by believing incorrectly.

Sextus retails a wide variety of skeptical arguments—some of them aimed at specific philosophical schools, especially the Stoics and Epicureans, and others aimed at broader, shared theses of dogmatic theology as well as popular religion (cf. Long 1990; Knuuttilla and Sihvola 2000; Bett 2015). Pervasive and seemingly interminable disagreement about the gods, as in other cases, is grist for the skeptic's mill. Sextus observes that philosophers have claimed that god is corporeal, incorporeal, anthropomorphic, not anthropomorphic, within the cosmos,

outside the cosmos, providential, and not providential (*PH* 3.3, 3.218–9). Some people even deny that the gods exist, some believe in the gods "invented" by the dogmatists, and some believe in the traditional gods. Within the latter camp, given the variety of religious traditions, we find an even greater variety of beliefs regarding the gods: how many there are, what forms they take, what constitutes appropriately pious worship and sacrifice, etc. (*PH* 3.219–28). And Sextus reviews no fewer than ten different accounts of the origin of our conceptions of the gods (*M* 9.14–48). With respect to this wealth of competing claims, the skeptic asks a simple question: how are we to decide between them? If we are concerned with having the right beliefs, we should not indulge an arbitrary preference. We need a convincing, rational basis for choosing one over the others.

One such basis is the claim, endorsed by Stoics and Epicureans, that all human beings have a naturally implanted, self-evidently true conception of god as an indestructible and blessed living being. The corruption of this natural conception over time would explain the diversity of belief about the gods, and the need to provide arguments in order to retrieve, clarify, and further articulate what is (or *was*) self-evident. However, even here we encounter apparently undecidable disputes. Should we accept the Stoic view that a blessed life requires providentially administering to the needs of those around us or the Epicurean view that a blessed life requires avoiding such potentially troublesome interactions to enjoy one's own tranquility (*PH* 3.5)? Following their respective defenses further we will find competing intuitions and arguments regarding the goodness of pleasure and virtue, benefit and harm, etc. If these defenses rest ultimately on claims of self-evident truth, the skeptic will allege that it is merely arbitrary to prefer one such "truth" to another, incompatible one. Alternatively, if the dogmatists offer supporting truths that are not self-evident, the skeptic will drive him to an infinite regress by demanding further justifications (*PH* 3.7–8).

Furthermore, both Stoics and Epicureans would agree that god's blessedness arises from the possession and exercise of all of the virtues. In that case, god will have to have the virtue of endurance. So, there must be things that are difficult for god to withstand or to abstain from; otherwise, there could be nothing to endure. But the only reason god would find something difficult to withstand or abstain from is that it would change him for the worse were he not to endure. It would follow that god must be perishable (*M* 9.152–7). Similarly, if god is to be courageous, and courage is knowledge of what is and is not to be feared, then there must be something that god finds fearful. And in that case, suffering this fearful thing would cause distress and a change for the worse, which would indicate again that god is perishable (*M* 9.158–9, cp. *DND* 3.38–9).

In general, the only reason human virtue is necessary and admirable is that we are vulnerable and dependent on others for our flourishing. If we were entirely self-sufficient and immune from any sort of pain, suffering, or harm, we would have no need of courage, justice, or moderation (cf. *NE* X 8, 1178b1–23). So, if we suppose that the happiness and virtue of gods and humans are of the same kind, as we must do to make sense of the aspiration of becoming like god, then we will have to conclude that the gods are as vulnerable and dependent as humans. But this conflicts with our supposedly natural conception of them as indestructible. Left with this apparently unresolvable tension, the skeptic would have us suspend judgment as to whether the gods are as we conceive them.

It turns out that every view about the nature and existence of the gods that Sextus considers runs into apparently insurmountable difficulties, and can be effectively countered with other views. Nevertheless, he claims, somewhat surprisingly, that the skeptic piously engages in traditional religious practices, and says that the gods exist and are provident (*PH* 3.2; *M* 9.49; Annas 2011; Bett 2015). But why would the skeptic say this if he has no beliefs one way or the other about the nature and existence of the gods? Such piety seems

to be an insincere, if excusable, attempt to avoid persecution by conforming to communal religious practices. However, to make the objection work in this case we would need to suppose that genuinely pious behavior requires some belief about the gods, which the skeptic lacks. But in place of such beliefs, we may suppose that the skeptic is moved by non-doxastic, affective states; just like cold and hunger will move him to seek warmth and food (*PH* 1.13, 21–4). If we can apply this model of skeptical action to religious practice, we may say that religious experience, and not belief, moves the skeptic to offer prayer and sacrifice to the gods (Thorsrud 2011). The skeptic's piety in that case will be sincere, but it will also be staunchly conservative as there are no grounds other than tradition and communal norms to guide his religious practice.

Meanwhile, with respect to philosophical, revisionary accounts of the gods, the skeptics develop counterarguments by relying on the rational tools and norms used by their Stoic and Epicurean interlocutors. By attempting to undermine these accounts, the skeptics engage critically with the Hellenistic project of reconceptualizing traditional religious views in order to integrate them into philosophical accounts of reality.[9]

Notes

1 For another overview of Hellenistic theology, see Mansfeld 1999. More detailed treatments of Epicurean theology may be found in Mansfeld 1993; Purinton 2001; Penwill 2009. For Stoic theology: Algra 2003; Algra 2009; Brennan 2009.
2 For more on Epicurean physics, see Robitzsch's chapter in this volume, "Epicureans on What There Is."
3 For more on this point, see the references in the following note.
4 For defense of the realist view: (Konstan 2011; Mansfeld 1993). For defense of the idealist view: (Sedley 2011; O'Keefe 2010: 155–62; Obbink 1996; Long and Sedley 1987: 144–9). In the most recent contribution to this issue, Veres (2017) argues that there is no principled way to decide between the competing interpretations as they both require some minimal compromise with orthodox Epicurean positions, but that Epicurus himself was probably quite happy to embrace the indeterminacy.
5 The nature of the logical and pedagogical relations between Stoic physics (including theology) and ethics is controversial. For further discussion: (Cooper 1995; Annas 1995; Inwood 2009).
6 See Ioppolo's chapter in this volume, "Nature, God, and Determinism in Early Stoicism."
7 This intuition, which is an application of the Principle of Sufficient Reason—the idea that there must be a cause or explanation for every positive fact—continues to play a fundamental role in both teleological and cosmological arguments (Pruss 2005).
8 For a contemporary overview of the Ontological Argument see Leftow 2005.
9 I am grateful for the insightful comments of Tim O'Keefe and Scott Aikin on a draft of this chapter.

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PART V

Ethics, Politics, and Society

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23

TRANQUILITY AS THE GOAL IN PYRRHONIAN SKEPTICISM

Casey Perin

In the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* Sextus Empiricus tells us that the Skeptical way of life [ἀγωγή] is called, among other things, "Pyrrhonian" [Πυρρώνειος].[1] This is so, he explains, because the philosopher Pyrrho (c. 365–275 BCE), more than anyone before him, embodied the Skeptical way of life (*PH* 1.7). We know little about Pyrrho's life and, given that he himself wrote nothing, possibly even less about his philosophical views. But others, beginning with his pupil and publicist Timon, present him as advocating and practicing a life without beliefs and, as a result, achieving an unusual level of tranquility [ἀταραξία].[2] In these two respects, at least, Pyrrho did embody the Skeptical way of life described by Sextus in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. The Skeptic not only achieves tranquility by living without beliefs [ἀδοξάστως], as Pyrrho is said to have done, but he lives without beliefs in order to achieve tranquility. Moreover, tranquility is not one among many aims the Skeptic has: it is the ultimate end or organizing goal [τέλος] of the Skeptical way of life. Here I want to ask and sketch answers to three questions about tranquility as the goal of Skepticism. Why, first of all, does Skepticism have a goal? Second, how can Skepticism have a goal? This is the question whether and how having a goal is compatible with other features Sextus attributes to Skepticism. And, finally, why is tranquility the goal of Skepticism?

Why Does Skepticism Have a Goal?

Skepticism as Sextus describes it is at once a kind of philosophy, a way of life, and an ability. Here is the opening of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*:

> For those who investigate anything, the likely result is either a discovery, or a denial of discovery and a confession of unknowability, or else a continuation of the investigation. For this reason, no doubt, in the case of philosophical investigations, too, some have said that they have discovered the truth, some have said that it can't be known, and others are still investigating. Those who are called Dogmatists in the proper sense of the word think they have discovered the truth—for example, the schools of Aristotle and Epicurus and the Stoics, and some others. The schools of Clitomachus and Carneades, and other Academics, have said that things can't be known. And the Skeptics are still investigating. Hence, the fundamental kinds of philosophy [αἱ ἀνωτάτω φιλοσοφίαι] are reasonably thought to be

> three: the Dogmatic, the Academic, and Skeptical. The former two it will be appropriate for others to describe: in the present work we will discuss in outline the Skeptical way of life [τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς].
>
> (*PH* 1.1–4)

Skepticism is the fundamental kind of philosophy that consists in engaging in philosophical investigation without holding any philosophical views. In contrast, the other fundamental kind of philosophy, Dogmatism, consists in holding philosophical views (including the view that nothing can be known).[3] Sextus also refers here to Skepticism as a way of life [ἀγωγή]. And one way of life can differ from another with respect to its organizing activity: there is something a person characteristically does as a result of adopting a particular way of life. For this reason, it is important that Sextus identifies Skepticism as not only a philosophy and a way of life, but also an ability:

> Skepticism is the ability [δύναμις] to construct oppositions among things which appear and are thought of in any way at all, an ability by which, because of the equipollence [ἰσοσθένειαν] in the opposed objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgment [ἐποχήν] and after this to tranquility [ἀταραξίαν].
>
> (*PH* 1.8)

Sextus' description of the Skeptic's ability is ambiguous, though Sextus himself seems happy to tolerate its ambiguity. That description can be given either a narrow or an expansive reading.

Call a possible object of belief, or something one could come to believe, a *candidate for belief*. On the narrow reading, the Skeptic is able to construct equipollent [ἰσοσθενής] conflicts between candidates for belief. A conflict of this sort is one in which the considerations in support of the truth of one candidate for belief *p* appear to someone to be no stronger, but also no weaker, than the considerations in support of some conflicting candidate for belief *q* (where two candidates for belief conflict just in case it is not possible for both to be true).[4] On the expansive reading, the Skeptic is able to achieve tranquility by bringing about suspension of judgment through equipollent conflicts between candidates for belief. The expansive reading places the achievement of the Skeptic's goal (tranquility) within the scope of the Skeptic's ability: it is just the ability to achieve that goal in a certain way. On the narrow reading, by contrast, the Skeptic's ability is just the ability to construct equipollent conflicts between candidates for belief, and the Skeptic exercises this ability in order to induce suspension of judgment and thereby achieve tranquility.

Sextus tells us that the Skeptic is simply someone who possesses the Skeptical ability (*PH* 1.11). The Skeptical way of life is characterized by the regular exercise of this ability. Hence, it differs from other ways of life with respect to what the Skeptic does, namely, and at a minimum (on the narrow reading), he constructs equipollent conflicts between candidates for belief. Moreover, according to Sextus, the regular exercise of the Skeptic's ability produces and sustains in the Skeptic a certain complex psychological condition: suspension of judgment in conjunction with tranquility. This psychological condition is not a by-product or incidental feature of the Skeptical way of life, but its very point. Any way of life must have a point, that is, some ultimate aim or final end that serves as its goal [τέλος] and whose pursuit is constitutive of following that way of life. In this respect, a way of life is different from merely living a life by pursuing a more or less haphazard collection of often conflicting short-term and long-term goals. A way of life is an especially organized and coherent way of living, and the principle source of its organization and coherence is the goal of that way of life.

A way of life is fully individuated by reference to its goal and the activity it prescribes for the achievement of that goal. All the major ancient Greek philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans) accept that happiness [εὐδαιμονία] or living well [τὸ εὖ ζῆν] is the goal of life. At this very general level of description, all the different ways of life advocated by these philosophers share the same goal. And so it might seem that they differ from one another only with respect to their prescriptions for how to achieve that goal. However, matters are not so simple. Different ancient Greek philosophers had different conceptions of happiness. Consequently, the goal pursued under the guise of happiness by the Stoic (living in accordance with nature) is different from the goal pursued under that guise by the Epicurean (pleasure) or the Aristotelian (virtuous activity). Skepticism has a goal because it is a way of life, and it is the way of life it is in virtue of its goal (tranquility) and the organizing activity in which the Skeptic engages in pursuit of that goal (the construction of equipollent conflicts between candidates for belief).

Two final points are worth making in this context. First, Sextus writes as though the organizing activity of the Skeptical way of life invariably results in the achievement of its goal. Anyone who does what the Skeptic characteristically does will achieve the tranquility that, according to Sextus, the Skeptic achieves. Sextus treats the possession and regular exercise of the Skeptical ability as sufficient both for living the Skeptical way of life and for achieving its goal. Second, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is, among other things, a recruitment manual or the ancient analogue of an infomercial. It advertises a way of life on the basis of the goal achieved by adopting that way of life. For this reason, its target audience is limited to those who *already* value the goal of the Skeptical way of life—tranquility—above all else. Sextus' sales pitch is, in effect, if tranquility is what you want, we have the way of life for you.

How Can Skepticism Have a Goal?

All ancient dogmatic philosophers—Stoics, Epicureans, Aristotelians—accept the same two formal definitions of the goal of life. Sextus presents these definitions at the beginning of his discussion of the goal of the Skeptical way of life:

> A goal is that for the sake of which everything is done or considered, but it is not itself done or considered for the sake of anything else [τὸ οὗ χάριν πάντα πράττεται ἢ θεωρεῖται, αὐτὸ δὲ οὐδενὸς ἕνεκα]. Or: the goal is the final object of desire [τὸ ἔσχατον τῶν ὀρεκτῶν].
>
> (*PH* 1.25)

Neither definition places an explicit doxastic condition on the pursuit of something as goal: for example, each is silent on what, if anything, a person must believe about the *value* of the goal he or she pursues. Nonetheless, any dogmatic philosopher believes that the goal of his way of life is something good. In fact, he believes that it is the source of the goodness of anything else that is good. Anything other than the goal is good, in his view, because of its broadly instrumental relation to the goal: it either promotes, sustains, or instantiates that goal. In this sense, the dogmatic philosopher believes that the goal of his way of life is not only *a* good, but *the* good. Adopting a dogmatic way of life, and so pursuing its goal, requires a person to have these beliefs about the value of its goal and those activities by which the goal is achieved. Does the Skeptical way of life, as Sextus describes it, differ in this respect from the Dogmatic way of life? What, if anything, does the Skeptic believe about the value of tranquility?

This is really a question about the scope of Skepticism, that is, about the range of candidates for belief about which the Skeptic, just in virtue of his Skepticism, suspends judgment. On the one hand, Sextus says that the Skeptic suspends judgment about *everything* (*PH* 1.31) and lives without beliefs [ἀδοξάστως] (*PH* 1.15, 1.24, 1.226, 3.235). On the other hand, it is clear that, according to Sextus, the Skeptic has *some* beliefs and that the scope of Skepticism is restricted insofar as the Skeptic has these beliefs (*PH* 1.13).[5] Call those beliefs Skepticism prohibits the Skeptic from having *dogmatic beliefs*, and those beliefs Skepticism permits the Skeptic to have *non-dogmatic beliefs*. The Skeptic lives without beliefs just in the sense that he lives without dogmatic beliefs.

What, according to Sextus, is a dogmatic belief? Here we have two general interpretative options. On one interpretation, a dogmatic belief is any belief about how things *are* rather than how they merely *appear* to one to be.[6] Hence, the Skeptic who lives without dogmatic beliefs suspends judgment about whether tranquility is good and believes only that it appears to him to be so. On a second interpretation, a dogmatic belief is one, but only one, kind of belief about how things are. There are several versions of this interpretation. One version holds that a dogmatic belief is distinguished by its content: it is any belief about a philosophical matter. Despite the fact that he is a philosopher, the Skeptic would then have no philosophical beliefs.[7] Alternatively, a belief might be dogmatic in virtue of the way it is formed or the grounds on which it is held.[8] The important point for my purposes here is that on either version of the second interpretation, the belief that tranquility is good need not be a dogmatic belief. There is nothing clearly philosophical about this belief and it need not be formed in any particular way or held on any particular sort of grounds. Hence, on the second interpretation, the Skeptic can and—since it is his goal—does believe that tranquility is good.

However, there is good reason to reject this interpretation of dogmatic belief in Sextus. At *PH* 1.27—and just after he has identified tranquility as the Skeptic's goal—Sextus presents what elsewhere I have called *the value argument*.[9] The conclusion of this argument is that the belief that something is good (or bad) is an obstacle to tranquility because the belief is a source or distress and anxiety. If I believe about anything *x* that it is good, I will be distressed if I do not possess *x*, I will pursue its acquisition with an intensity or vehemence incompatible with tranquility, and once I possess *x* I will be anxious about losing it. I can achieve tranquility only if, like the Skeptic, I suspend judgment about the value of things. Notice that the value argument turns on the claim that *any* belief that something is good or bad—regardless of the conception of goodness on which it relies, the way in which it is formed, or the grounds on which it is held—is a source of distress and anxiety.[10] Notice as well that this argument is supposed to target the relevant subset of dogmatic beliefs (those about the value of things) and to leave intact any belief that is compatible with Skepticism. As far as the value argument is concerned, then, any belief that something is good or bad is a dogmatic belief. If that is so, and if Skeptic lives without dogmatic beliefs, the Skeptic does *not* believe that tranquility is good. That is the first point. The second point is that it is a consequence of the value argument that anyone who believes that tranquility is good thereby thwarts his own pursuit of it. If I believe that tranquility is good, as soon as I achieve it, I will be anxious about losing it, and for that reason I will have lost it. The upshot of the value argument is that tranquility comes only by way of suspension of judgment about its value.

Now, however, another question arises. Dogmatic philosophy plausibly claims that anyone who pursues some *X* as the goal has certain beliefs about the value of *X* (and so about those activities by which *X* is achieved) and pursues *X* as the goal because he has those beliefs about the value of *X*. Yet, according to Sextus, the Skeptic pursues

tranquility as the goal without having any beliefs about its value. How, or in what sense, can the Skeptic (or anyone else) pursue something he does not believe to be good as the goal? At this point we might return to the dogmatic definitions of the goal Sextus rehearses at *PH* 1.25. The Dogmatist defines the goal exclusively by reference to the structure of a person's desires and actions. *G* is the goal for me if and only if I desire and so do everything for the sake of *G* while I do not desire *G* for the sake of anything else. In this way *G* is just something I desire that stands in a unique relation to everything else I desire: it is for me the last or final object of desire. In this way the very formulation of the dogmatic definitions of the goal allow us to read Sextus' statement that tranquility is the goal of Skepticism as no more than an observation about the structure of the Skeptic's desires and the actions they motivate. The Skeptic is, among other things, someone who desires and does everything for the sake of tranquility.[11] Sextus can argue that given the dogmatic philosopher's own definitions of the goal, the pursuit of something as the goal does not require believing that it is good. It is sufficient that his desires and actions are structured in such a way that they converge on a single thing. In *this* way the Skeptic has a goal, and that goal is tranquility.

At least according to Sextus, however, there is more to say about the Skeptic's pursuit of tranquility as the goal. Some background here is helpful. Perhaps the most common objection in antiquity to Skepticism is that it is not a way of life at all because it renders those who adopt it incapable of action.[12] The thought behind this objection is that those dogmatic beliefs prohibited by Skepticism are required for action. Hence, the Skeptic who lives without dogmatic beliefs is thereby reduced to inaction. In response, Sextus insists that the Skeptic is able not only to act, but also to live what looks at least from the outside to be a normal life. However, Sextus does *not* argue that this is so because those non-dogmatic beliefs compatible with Skepticism are sufficient for action. Instead, Sextus says that the Skeptic's actions are guided not by belief of any kind but by a different psychological state he calls an appearance [ἡ φαντασία] or, equivalently, what is apparent [τὸ φαινόμενον] (*PH* 1.22). The idea that appearances are what Sextus calls the Skeptic's "criterion of action" [τὸ κριτήριον τοῦ πράσσειν] (*PH* 1.21) enables Sextus to explain more fully how the Skeptic pursues tranquility as the goal. It is not just that the Skeptic desires tranquility and that this desire is the source of all the other desires the Skeptic has. It is also the case that tranquility appears to the Skeptic to be good and the source of the goodness of anything else that is good. This appearance is part of the explanation of the Skeptic's pursuit of tranquility as the goal. And that is so, plausibly, because it is the source of the Skeptic's desire for tranquility and the basis for its place in the structure of the Skeptic's desires. The Skeptic pursues tranquility as the goal because it appears to him to be good—just as the Dogmatist pursues pleasure or virtuous activity or living according to nature because he believes it to be good. Appearances do for the Skeptic just what beliefs do for the Dogmatist.

Here as elsewhere the distinction between appearances and beliefs is central to Sextus' version of Skepticism. However, that distinction is at best underdeveloped in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Sextus tells us little more than that an appearance is a passive and so involuntary psychological state with content (*PH* 1.22). Yet the same might be thought to be true of belief.[13] Appearances also resemble beliefs with respect to their capacity to guide action. As a result, it is not easy to say just how, according to Sextus, appearances differ from beliefs. In fact, it is easy to worry that since appearances guide action in just the way beliefs do, and so play the same role in the explanation of the Skeptic's actions that beliefs play in the explanation of the Dogmatist's actions, appearances just are beliefs and Skepticism is just another Dogmatic way of life.[14]

This is a serious worry. Sextus presents Skepticism as a way of life that significantly alters the psychological condition of the person who adopts it. To become a Skeptic, according to Sextus, is to go from being someone who lives with beliefs to being someone who lives without beliefs and thereby achieves tranquility. And living without beliefs is not supposed to involve living with a substantial psychological lacuna—a kind of mental gap once filled by those beliefs dislodged by Skepticism. At least some, and more likely many or most, of those beliefs the Skeptic discards in becoming a Skeptic are replaced by appearances with the same content. Sextus suggests that these appearances are the ineliminable marks made upon us in various ways by nature and culture (*PH* 1.23). Suppose, as I will suggest below is in fact the case, that the Skeptic begins as someone who believes that tranquility is good. When he examines the matter as a Skeptic, and so constructs equally convincing arguments or marshals equally forceful considerations for and against the claim that tranquility is good, the Skeptic suspends judgment about the goodness of tranquility. Nonetheless, it might still appear to the Skeptic that tranquility is good. The appearance of tranquility as good, like any appearance, falls outside the bounds of any Skeptical investigation or inquiry: it is, as Sextus says, not an object of investigation [ἀζήτητος] (*PH* 1.22). An exercise of the Skeptical ability can change what we believe but not how things appear to us to be. The serious worry, however, is that Sextus has misdescribed the psychological change produced in the Skeptic by Skepticism. That change leaves intact the beliefs Sextus claims it eliminates and instead only creates a kind of detachment on the Skeptic's part from the beliefs he continues to hold. This detachment is at least in part a matter of the Skeptic holding beliefs he now believes, as a result of the exercise of his Skeptical ability, he has no reason to hold.

Note, finally, that, according to Sextus, the Skeptical way of life has both a goal *and* a criterion of action. Why is this so, and what exactly is the relation between these two things? It might be important here that Sextus presents the criterion of action (*PH* 1.21–24) immediately prior to presenting the goal of the Skeptical way of life (*PH* 1.25–30). Recall the objection that since the Skeptic lives without beliefs, and those beliefs he lives without are required for action, the Skeptic can't act. An appeal to the fact that the Skeptical way of life has a goal does nothing to disarm this objection. In fact, it will only invite the response that pursuing, let alone achieving, the goal of a way of life requires having beliefs about the value of that goal and how to achieve it. For this reason, Sextus must respond to the objection that Skepticism renders the Skeptic incapable of action *before* he introduces the idea that the Skeptical way of life has a goal. The Skeptic's criterion of action—that is, appearances that guide action in the way that beliefs do—explains how the Skeptic can act. It also explains how the Skeptic can have and pursue something as the goal of his way of life. The fact that the Skeptical way of life has a goal explains why the Skeptic's actions, made possible by the Skeptical criterion of action, constitute something sufficiently coherent and organized to count as a way of life. In this way, Sextus implements a kind of philosophical division of labor: the notion of the Skeptical criterion of action discharges one philosophical task, the notion of the goal of the Skeptical way of life another.

Why Is Tranquility the Goal of Skepticism?

I want to consider next why tranquility is the goal of Skepticism. After all, Skepticism is the only ancient philosophical way of life that identifies tranquility as its goal.[15] In general, we can explain why something is the goal of a way of life by appeal to other, more fundamental features of that way of life. So, for example, we can explain why living in

accordance with nature is the goal of the Stoic way of life by appeal to basic principles of Stoic ethics or physics. The problem, however, is that it is not at all clear whether there are features of Skepticism that can explain why tranquility is its goal. The obvious choice is the Skeptic's distinctive ability, since tranquility is supposed to be the product of its exercise. But so, too, is suspension of judgment. In fact, Sextus tells us that some (presumably heterodox) Skeptics identify suspension of judgment as the goal (*PH* 1.30).[16]

Sextus himself does *not* try to explain why tranquility is the goal of Skepticism by appeal to more basic features of Skepticism. Instead, he appeals to facts about those people who become Skeptics and so adopt the Skeptical way of life. He presents the pursuit of tranquility as the goal as prior to, and a condition on becoming, a Skeptic. Two passages make clear what he takes to be the relation between pursuing tranquility as the goal and being a Skeptic.

> We say that the causal principle [ἀρχὴν αἰτιώδη] of Skepticism is the hope of becoming tranquil [τὴν ἐλπίδα τοῦ ἀταρκτήσειν]. Gifted individuals [οἱ μεγαλοφυεῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων] who are troubled by the anomaly in things and puzzled about what they ought to assent to, came to investigate what is true in things and what false, on the grounds that by deciding these issues they would become tranquil [ὡς ἐκ τῆς ἐπικρίσεως τούτων ἀταρακτήσοντες].
>
> (*PH* 1.12)

> For [γάρ) the Skeptic began to do philosophy [ἀρξάμενος φιλοσοφεῖν] in order to decide among appearances and to apprehend which are true and which false, so that he would be tranquil [ὥστε ἀταρακτῆσαι]. He came upon an equipollent dispute [τὴν ἰσοσθενῆ διαφωνίαν] and, being unable to decide it, he suspended judgment. And when he suspended judgment, tranquility in matters of belief followed fortuitously [τυχικῶς].
>
> (*PH* 1.26)

At *PH* 1.12 Sextus tells us that the desire for tranquility is the origin of the Skeptical way of life. The Skeptic begins as someone who is distressed because puzzled about what to believe, and he investigates those matters that puzzle him in order to discover the truth and thereby achieve tranquility. Sextus does not say in this passage that the desire for tranquility that lies at the origin of the Skeptical way of life is a desire for tranquility *as the goal*. However, that is the clear implication of Sextus' remarks at *PH* 1.26. In this second passage, Sextus first identifies the goal of Skepticism (*PH* 1.25) and then explains why it is tranquility (*PH* 1.26). This explanation builds on what Sextus has already told us at *PH* 1.12. Here the Skeptic is described as someone who begins to do philosophy in order to discover the truth and thereby achieve tranquility. Sextus now adds that instead of discovering the truth, and in response to an equipollent conflict between candidates for belief, the Skeptic suspends judgment. And then, as what can't but strike him as a piece of extraordinary good luck, the Skeptic achieves tranquility.

The important point for my purposes here is that the fact that the Skeptic begins to do philosophy in pursuit of tranquility explains why tranquility is the Skeptic's goal only if the Skeptic begins to do philosophy in pursuit of tranquility not merely as one among many things he desires but *as the goal*. Otherwise, there is a gap in Sextus' explanation: it does not explain why the Skeptic's goal is tranquility but, at most, why the Skeptic pursues tranquility, though not necessarily as the goal, by means of suspension of judgment rather than the discovery of truth. Sextus attempts to explain why tranquility is the goal of

Skepticism by connecting it with a desire for tranquility that originally motivates the Skeptic to do philosophy. But that connection does the explanatory work Sextus intends it to do only if it is a connection between the goal the Skeptic pursues when he begins to do philosophy and the goal he pursues as a Skeptic. Sextus' explanation is, in effect, that tranquility is the Skeptic's goal because the Skeptic begins as someone who pursues tranquility as the goal and he becomes a Skeptic in pursuit of that goal. And this is exactly the sort of explanation Sextus should offer. The fact that someone adopts a particular way of life can be explained only by appeal to that person's antecedent desires. But what antecedent desire could explain why someone adopts the Skeptical way of life? The answer: the desire for tranquility as the goal in conjunction with the discovery that the Skeptical way of life is the best way to achieve that goal.

In this context it is especially significant that Sextus explains why tranquility is the Skeptic's goal by appeal to the desire that initially motivates the Skeptic to do *philosophy*. By Sextus' own description, Skepticism is a philosophy and the Skeptic a philosopher. Hence, an account of why the Skeptic began to do philosophy is an account of the process by which a non-Skeptic becomes a Skeptic. The person Sextus describes as beginning to do philosophy in pursuit of tranquility is not yet a Skeptic because he is not yet a philosopher let alone a philosopher with the Skeptic's distinctive ability. This non-Skeptic is someone who already—prior to his adoption of the Skeptical way of life—pursues tranquility as the goal. And the non-Skeptic's conversion to Skepticism is not supposed to change the goal he pursues but only the means by which he pursues it.

Sextus' answer to the question "Why is tranquility the goal of Skepticism?" is simply that tranquility is the goal of those who become Skeptics and do so in pursuit of that goal. Those who become Skeptics fall into two distinct groups, and each group is important to Sextus' account of tranquility as the goal of Skepticism. The first group consists of those we might call *the original Skeptics*. These are the non-Skeptics who become Skeptics by first developing Skepticism as a way of life. As non-Skeptics, they pursue tranquility as the goal, and they develop Skepticism as a way of life, and so become the first Skeptics, in pursuit of that goal. The pursuit of tranquility as the goal precedes, and partially explains, the development of Skepticism as a way of life. The second, and larger, group of Skeptics—call them *the later Skeptics*—consists of those who adopt the Skeptical way of life *after* Skepticism had been established as a way of life. The later Skeptics, like the original Skeptics, pursue tranquility as the goal prior to becoming Skeptics, and become Skeptics in pursuit of that goal. They adopt the Skeptical way of life because they share its goal and they discover, or at least become convinced, that the Skeptical way of life is the best way to achieve that goal.

By answering, in this way, the question "Why is tranquility the goal of Skepticism?" Sextus raises a second question: "Why does someone who pursues tranquility as the goal become a Skeptic?" Sextus gives two different answers to this question because he locates two distinct sources of distress and anxiety. First, there is perplexity about what to believe. The person who seeks tranquility as the goal becomes a Skeptic upon discovering that his anxiety and distress about what to believe is relieved, and so tranquility achieved, when he believes nothing at all. This is the unexpected discovery that tranquility can be achieved by means of the suspension of judgment the Skeptic is uniquely able to reliably induce in himself (and, when in a philanthropic mood, in others). The perplexity about what to believe that generates anxiety and distress is topic-neutral and so completely general: for any value of p, at least where p ranges over propositions about how things are rather than merely appear to one to be, someone can be perplexed about whether to believe that p and, as result, anxious and distressed. That is why in one passage Sextus describes tranquility as

following upon suspension of judgment about *everything* (*PH* 1.31). But to say all of this is to say no more, and no less, than that Skepticism is *one* way, possibly among several, to achieve tranquility, and that is why someone who pursues tranquility as the goal might become a Skeptic. Sextus identifies any belief about the goodness or badness of something as a second source of anxiety and distress. Since that is so, tranquility requires having no beliefs of this sort. This is the conclusion of the value argument. That argument purports to show that Skepticism is the *only* way to achieve tranquility. Hence, anyone who pursues tranquility as the goal must become a Skeptic.

It's worth making one final point. Some commentators have objected that tranquility is an implausible candidate for the goal of a way of life. They insist that neither tranquility nor any other state of mind satisfies the conditions that Aristotle correctly places on the goal (that it is desired only for its own sake, that everything else is desired for its sake, that it is sufficient to make a life not only good but incapable of being made better).[17] This objection is misplaced. Nowhere in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* does Sextus defend tranquility as the goal of life. He makes no attempt to convince his reader of its value, let alone its supreme value as the source of all other value. And this is no accident. Sextus simply assumes you already desire tranquility and pursue it as the goal of your life. If you don't, then, as Sextus would be the first to concede, Skepticism has little to offer you.

Notes

1 I use, often modified, the translation of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* found in (Annas and Barnes 2000).
2 For more on Pyrrho see (Perin 2018).
3 Sextus actually says that there are three fundamental kinds of philosophy: the Dogmatic, the Academic, and the Skeptical. However, given that the Academic as Sextus understands him is just a kind of Dogmatist—namely, one that holds the view that nothing can be known—these three kinds of philosophy are reducible to two more fundamental kinds: the Dogmatic and the Skeptical. For this point see (Perin 2017).
4 For discussion of the notions of equipollence and the Skeptic's ability to construct equipollent conflicts between candidates for belief, see (Perin 2014: 3–6).
5 See Perin 2010: 59–62.
6 I have argued in detail for this interpretation of dogmatic belief in Sextus in Chapter 3 of Perin 2010.
7 I have argued at length elsewhere that there could be no such philosopher. See (Perin 2013).
8 Something like this view can be extracted from Frede 1997. For discussion see, again, Chapter 3 of Perin 2010 together with Morison 2011.
9 I discuss the value argument and its implications for the scope of Skepticism in Perin 2010: 24–5 and 73–4.
10 Otherwise (as Myles Burnyeat first noted in Burnyeat 1997: 52), the argument loses whatever plausibility it might have. Why should the fact that I believe that *x* is good given some distinctively philosophical conception of goodness, or that I formed this belief in a certain way, or hold it on a certain sort of grounds, determine whether or not I am distressed by my failure to possess *x* or anxious about losing it?
11 For something in the neighborhood of this point, see (Bett 2010: 187–8).
12 An objection repeated with great rhetorical force by David Hume in (Hume 1999: 207). See also this volume's chapter by Schwab on skeptical defenses against the Epicurean and Stoic "Inaction" Argument.
13 There is more to say here and I am skating over various details. One possibility is that Sextus conceives of belief, or the mental act of assent that produces belief, as in some sense voluntary. At *PH* 1.19 Sextus says that the Skeptic assents involuntarily [ἀβουλήτως] in accordance with an appearance, and at *PH* 1.22 he describes the appearance itself as an involuntary [ἀβούλητον] psychological state or condition [πάθος]. These passages might be read as indicating that he thinks that, unlike appearances, dogmatic beliefs are voluntary. But Sextus says nothing by way of explication about the sense in which beliefs but not appearances are voluntary.

14 For a discussion of a version of this worry, see (Annas 1993: 209–11 and 355–9).
15 For this point, see (Striker 1996: 188).
16 Or, rather, Sextus says that these Skeptics *added* suspension of judgment to tranquility (and moderation in matters concerning one's bodily conditions). Diogenes Laertius 9.107 says that the Skeptics, who presumably included Timon and Aenesidemus, say that suspension of judgment is the goal.
17 A version of this objection is rehearsed and endorsed by Striker 1996: 185 and 193–5).

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Further Reading

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24

EPICUREANS ON PLEASURE, DESIRE, AND HAPPINESS

Benjamin A. Rider

Epicurus participated in a long debate in ancient Greek philosophy about the viability of hedonism as a theory of the good life. Hedonism holds that a person's life is good to the extent that it contains pleasure and is free from pain, and the theory has immediate intuitive appeal. Pleasure *feels* good, pain *feels* bad. But hedonists faced powerful opposition. Antisthenes, a follower of Socrates who inspired Cynics like Diogenes of Sinope and Crates of Thebes, famously asserted that he would prefer madness to pleasure (DL 6.3). The Stoics classified pleasure [*hēdonē*] as a disturbing emotion along with anger and fear, to be avoided and eliminated as much as possible from a rational and virtuous life (DL 7.110–4). Even philosophers more sympathetic to pleasure's goodness, such as Aristotle, carefully subordinated pleasure to more fundamental goods (in Aristotle's case, virtuous activity) (*NE* I.8, VII.12–13). Most defenders of pleasure as the highest good (including the Cyrenaics and Eudoxus, a follower of Plato) won few converts and were significant in later debates mostly because of how others criticized and rejected their ideas.

By contrast, Epicurus and his followers formulated a version of hedonism that became one of the most popular and enduring Greek and Roman philosophical schools, one that continues to offer a rich and appealing philosophy of life today. Epicurus sought to address recurring criticisms of hedonism by rethinking the nature of the highest pleasure and the kind of life one must live to experience it. Hedonism has often been criticized, perhaps unfairly, for promoting unrestrained indulgence of a human's most base desires—as "a doctrine worthy only of swine," as Mill remarked (2002, Chapter 2). In response, the Epicureans argued that the best, most pleasurable life involves satisfying simple, healthy desires while cultivating a secure and supportive network of friendships and avoiding pursuits and commitments that bring unnecessary pain and stress.

The Epicurean Account of Happiness

The Epicureans accepted and worked within the basic assumptions of the eudaimonist tradition of Greek ethics, most clearly formulated by Aristotle in his ethical works: All humans desire *eudaimonia*—happiness or flourishing, a well lived life. But people disagree about what *eudaimonia* is and how it can be attained (*NE* I.5). Even though everyone wants to live well, most do not, either because they have false ideas about what it means to flourish and live well, or because they are confused about how to attain it. For example, if

someone believes the good life requires accumulating a lot of money, he may choose a career with long hours and frequent travel, sacrificing close relationships with friends and family and thus losing something crucial for true happiness while pursuing something that is not. An ethical philosopher, therefore, has two main tasks. First, he must identify and describe the *telos*—the end or goal—that humans should pursue to achieve *eudaimonia*. What is the goal that, if achieved, makes a human's life go well? Then, he should provide guidance about how that end can be pursued and achieved most effectively. When practicing eudaimonist ethics, a person reflects on his life and thinks about what makes it flourish and make sense, not just at one time or in one respect, but overall.[1]

Epicurus brought hedonism into the eudaimonist framework. The goal or end that humans naturally seek, he argued, is a life of pleasure, free from pain and disturbance. Pleasure is "the starting point and goal [*telos*] of living blessedly […] our first innate good" (*Ep. Men.* 128–9). In Cicero's *On Moral Ends*, the Epicurean spokesman Torquatus gives two arguments to defend this claim. First, he appeals to the behavior of infants:

> As soon as each animal is born, it seeks pleasure and rejoices in it as the highest good, and rejects pain as the greatest bad thing, driving it away from itself as effectively as it can; and it does this while it is still not corrupted, while the judgment of nature herself is unperverted and sound.
>
> (*De Fin.* 1.30)

Adult humans, the Epicureans argued, are not reliable judges about what is good. Our evaluations are corrupted by all kinds of false ideas and foolish attitudes we've absorbed from our upbringing and culture. Adult behavior provides ample evidence—people chasing after social status and wealth, tormenting their minds with anxiety about what co-workers think about them or whether they can keep up with the latest gadgets. The desires of babies and other young animals, however, reveal nature's true basic goods. They cry out when pained by hunger, cold, or loneliness, seeking the pleasures of a full tummy, a warm blanket, and an attentive parent. In their uncorrupted behaviors we see nature's true needs.

Torquatus' second Epicurean argument for hedonism appeals to direct experience. We feel immediately that pleasure is good and pain is bad:

> These things are perceived, as we perceive that fire is hot, that snow is white, that honey is sweet. In none of these examples is there any call for proof by sophisticated reasoning; it is enough simply to point them out.
>
> (*De Fin.* 1.30)

When you burn your hand on the stove, you perceive, in an immediate and incontrovertible way, that pain is bad, just as you can immediately perceive pleasure's goodness when you eat ice cream. No deep arguments are needed, because we can "judge every good by the criterion of feeling" (*Ep. Men.* 129).

So far Epicurus would agree with most other hedonists. But he is also a eudaimonist, which calls for a broader focus. A happy *life* consists not simply in episodes of pleasure, nor even in a greater quantity of pleasure over pain. Instead, the objective is to achieve a life that is good *as a whole*, optimizing the quality of life in the long term. Pursuing this goal requires managing your life carefully, making choices to maintain pleasurable, pain-free experience as long as you are alive. Therefore, as Epicurus explains, we shouldn't choose every pleasure that presents itself, nor avoid every pain. The pleasure of eating a second piece of cake when you are already full is not worth the stomachache it brings later;

conversely, undergoing a painful surgery may be necessary to continue pleasurable experience in the future. So, Epicurus says, "it is […] appropriate to make all these decisions by a comparative measurement and in examination of the advantages and disadvantages" (*Ep. Men.* 130). Philosophy helps us to make those decisions wisely.

Types of Pleasure

To exercise good judgment and to choose wisely, we first must understand the nature of the goal. What is pleasure, anyway? What forms does it take, and how should we prioritize them? Epicurus defends some counterintuitive but, I would argue, powerful ideas about the varieties of pleasure and which pleasures matter for a happy life. These ideas remain one of the most interesting and challenging aspects of Epicureanism.

First, Epicurus distinguishes between *bodily pleasures* and *mental pleasures* (DL 10.136; *De Fin.* 1.55). Bodily pleasures include the pleasures of eating, drinking, and sex, as well as the pleasure we feel from being warm and comfortable. Some mental pleasures are joy (*chara*), confidence, and (possibly) the pleasures from philosophical discussion (see *SV* 33 and 34).

Now, philosophers from Plato to Mill have distinguished mental and physical pleasures, but making a sharp division turns out to be more difficult than it might at first seem. This fact becomes apparent when you try to put certain pleasures into clear categories. For example, what is the source of the pleasure of listening to music? Or looking at a painting? Or savoring a gourmet meal? Many if not all human pleasures encompass both bodily sensations of some kind as well as mental engagement and discernment.

Epicurus evidently held that mental pleasures and pains have more impact on quality of life than bodily pleasures and pains. This is, in part, because mental pleasures and pains can extend to the past (remembering past pleasures) and future (anticipating future pleasures, fearing future suffering), while bodily pleasures and pains exist only in the present moment (DL 10.137; *De Fin.* 1.55–7). Epicurus also held that a sufficiently practiced person could annul or at least distract themselves from occurrent physical pain by thinking about or remembering pleasures (see, e.g., Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.95). Epicurus himself claimed he remained happy even while dying from a painful urinary blockage, because he focused his attention on pleasurable memories of philosophical discussions with his friends (*Letter to Idomeneus*, DL 10.22).

But Epicurus also asserted, more mysteriously, that all mental pleasures *depend* on physical pleasures. Cicero's character Torquatus explains:

> Although mental pleasure and pain do produce good and bad feelings, nevertheless both of them have their origins in the body and take the body as their point of reference.
>
> (*De Fin.* 1.55)

In the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero's character quotes an intriguing passage from Epicurus' lost work *On the End*:

> For my part I cannot conceive of anything as good if I remove the pleasures perceived by means of taste and sex and listening to music, and the pleasant motions felt by the eyes through beautiful sights, or any other pleasures which some sensations generate in the man as a whole. Certainly it is impossible to say that mental delight is the only good. For a delighted mind, as I understand it, consists in the expectation of all the things I just mentioned—to be of a nature able to acquire them without pain.
>
> (III.41–2 = LS 21L)

The last sentence seems to suggest that, for Epicureans, each episode of mental pleasure consists merely in thinking about some bodily pleasure (compare Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 546F = LS 29M; Plutarch, *Non Posse* 1089D = LS 29N). That is, you can *remember* a tasty meal, *anticipate* calm and peaceful rest after a stressful trip, or *enjoy* your current state of comfort and satiety, but there are no distinctly mental pleasures of, for example, learning or contemplating truth.

Epicurus' stance on this topic may be a response to the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, both of whom considered understanding and contemplating abstract truths as the highest pleasures and sought, in their own ways, to separate these pleasures from embodied life (see Plutarch, *Non Posse* 1093c = IG I-127). Consequently, both philosophers' theories about happiness are rather elitist and exclusionary—very few people can achieve their most elevated forms of flourishing. Epicurus takes a more egalitarian line, while seeking to ground pleasure more firmly in concrete experience.

In any event, Epicurus seems to endorse at least some pleasures usually classified as mental (for example, discussing philosophy with friends, in the *Letter to Idomeneus*). But this need not be inconsistent. First, since Epicureans are materialists and hold that the mind, like the body, is composed of arrangements of atoms in void, all mental pleasures are necessarily physically manifested, just as all bodily pleasures are felt by the mind. Moreover, as I said before, the distinction isn't as clear-cut as it might seem. Many pleasures that Plato or Mill might classify as mental do require physical engagement. For example, consider the pleasures of philosophical discussion. A Platonist would hold that philosophy's distinctive pleasures arise from engagement with a higher realm of truth; we experience purer pleasures as our minds encounter purer objects (see *Rep.* 9.585b-e). By contrast, Epicurus thinks about this differently. You are *seeing* your friends, *hearing* their words, and, as you think about what they say, your *body* responds, physical processes of life taking on a smooth flow as you enjoy the experience. Though we cannot be sure exactly what Epicurus meant by saying that mental pleasures depend on physical pleasures, then, there's reason to think that he may have been on to something (especially given a materialist worldview).

Epicurus' second important distinction between types of pleasure was more original and challenging, and its interpretation remains controversial. Epicurus evidently distinguished between *kinetic pleasures*—those involving some kind of "movement [*kinēsis*]"—and *katastematic* (or *static) pleasures* (from "*katastēma*" referring to a condition of equilibrium)—those arising from the healthy *state* of the body and mind, free from pain and disturbance. This distinction cuts across the previous one. Epicurean texts mention both mental and bodily kinetic pleasures, and mental and bodily katastematic pleasures (see, e.g., DL 10.136).

This distinction was important because, Epicurus argues, the pleasures that matter for *eudaimonia* are katastematic ones: the health and painless state of the body [*aponia*] and the tranquility of the mind (*ataraxia*—literally "freedom from disturbance [*tarachē*]") (*Ep. Men.* 128; *KD* 3, 18). Epicurus uses this idea to argue that pleasure has a *limit*. Once your body and mind are in a good state, the quality of your experience of life cannot be improved—it is as good as it can get. At this point, there is no need for *more* food, luxury, or indulgence, because adding more cannot make your life any better, and it may even damage your ability to experience health and tranquility in the long term.

An illustration is an all-you-can-eat buffet. It offers an overwhelming variety of alluring appetizers, entrees, and desserts. On your first visit to the buffet, you fill your plate with enough food to sate your hunger; you have enough to maintain your body in a healthy condition until the next mealtime. But given the choices, it is tempting to fill and eat

another plate of food, and maybe even a third plate of desserts. In the short term, you'll have a stomachache, wondering why you didn't stop when full. In the longer term, if overeating becomes a habit, your bodily health will deteriorate, and consequently you will experience more pain and less pleasure overall than you might otherwise have had.

The doctrine of the limit of pleasure therefore gave Epicureans a powerful response to the common objection that hedonism licenses excess and shameless indulgence. Once you reach that limit of satisfied, stable balance, your pleasure can't get better. Further indulgence doesn't help, and, as the example illustrates, it's often actively harmful. As Epicurus puts it,

> It is not drinking bouts and continuous partying and enjoying boys and women, or consuming fish and the other dainties of an extravagant table, which produce the pleasant life, but sober calculation which searches out reasons for every choice and avoidance.
>
> (*Ep. Men.* 132)

Since ancient times, however, some critics have felt that Epicurus' clever doctrine addresses one objection only at the expense of the broader coherence and plausibility of the theory as a whole. One problem is that Epicurus and his followers usually describe this highest pleasure only negatively—it is *freedom* from pain [*aponia*] and *freedom* from disturbance [*ataraxia*]. But how can *lacking* something be the best experience of life? Once might argue, as did the Cyrenaics, that merely to be free from bad things is not the greatest pleasure, but only a neutral state—not feeling positively or negatively at all. It's like being asleep or dead (DL 2.89 = IG I-10; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromates* 2.21,130.8 = IG I-13).

In his extensive criticisms of Epicurean ethics in *On Moral Ends* Book 2, Cicero makes a similar point. He argues that Epicurus "vacillates" in his descriptions of pleasure and "sometimes fails to understand what this term 'pleasure' signifies, and what the substance is that underlies the word" (2.6). Sometimes, Cicero complains, Epicurus and his followers use the words for pleasure as everyone else does, to refer to "the perception by the senses of some delightful stimulation" (2.14). But sensory stimulation is manifestly *not* the same as freedom from pain:

> Someone might say, "I am so elated that everything is in a whirl," and someone else might say, "Truly my mind is now in a torment." The former is wildly delighted, the latter racked by pain, but there is room in the middle for neither joy nor anguish. Likewise, in the case of the body, between the enjoyment of the most sought after pleasures and the agony of the most intense pains there is a condition that is free from either. [… Epicurus] cannot make those who have self-knowledge—that is, who have clearly perceived their own nature and senses—believe that freedom from pain is the same as pleasure.
>
> (2.14, 16)

Later, Cicero contends that the arguments supporting Epicureanism depend on a fallacy of equivocation, using "pleasure" ambiguously to make their position appear more attractive than it is. He criticizes Epicurus' appeal to the behavior of infants:

> What sort of pleasure, static [katastematic] or kinetic […] will the bawling infant use to determine the supreme good and evil? If static, then clearly its natural

> instinct is for self-preservation, which I accept. If kinetic, as you in fact claim, then there will be no pleasure too foul to be experienced. Moreover, our new-born creature will not be starting from the highest pleasure, which you regard as the absence of pain.
>
> (2.31)

Admittedly, infants and uncorrupted animals want to *feel* good; they desire sensory stimulation, kinetic pleasure. But if so, how can the baby's behavior be evidence that *katastematic* pleasure is the highest good? By conflating two very different kinds of experience and calling both "pleasure," Cicero believes, Epicurus seeks illicitly to combine the crude enticements of indulgent hedonism with the moderation and order of a theory that aims for satisfied painlessness. Cicero suggests that while such a bait-and-switch sales pitch appeals to the shallow minded, it fails as a coherent and livable ethical theory.

Is Cicero's criticism fair? In part, the issue turns on how exactly we are meant to understand the distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasures, and what precisely Epicureans had in mind in identifying *aponia* and *ataraxia* as the highest good. Unfortunately, on this point the surviving texts are especially fragmentary and contradictory, leaving open a variety of interpretations.

Since Cicero's *On Moral Ends* has the most detailed description of the doctrine, many interpreters use it as a starting point (including Long and Sedley 1987; Mitsis 1988; Woolf 2009). According to Cicero, Epicureans classify any pleasure that actively stimulates the senses as kinetic, involving a "movement" in sensation (*De Fin.* 2.10, 2.16). These sensory, kinetic pleasures include both appetite satisfactions that fill deficiencies like hunger (what we might call "restorative" pleasures) and pleasant sensations that do not fill a deficiency, such as the pleasures of hearing beautiful music or seeing a beautiful statue ("non-restorative"). This breakdown leaves katastematic pleasure as simply the *state* of being free from pain or mental disturbance. This state does not in itself "stimulate the senses" (which would make it kinetic); but we recognize that it is good because of the relief we receive when pain or distress abates (1.37).[2]

Notice that Cicero's way of drawing the distinction plays directly into his criticisms—if only kinetic pleasures involve sensory stimulation, it becomes puzzling why katastematic pleasure is *pleasure* and why we should think of it as being the goal. Moreover, Epicurus clearly places great importance on sensory pleasure. As quoted above, he claims that he "cannot conceive of anything as good" without the pleasures of taste, sight, sound, and sex (Cicero, *Tusc.* III.18.41 = LS 21L1). But if Cicero's interpretation of the distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasures is right, these are kinetic pleasures, and why would he care so much about inferior, kinetic pleasures? If the mere state of being free from pain itself represents the highest limit of quality experience, why would an Epicurean need them?

For this reason, many scholars look for other ways to interpret the distinction. The debate about this topic has produced a dizzying array of interpretations.[3] For the purposes of this chapter, I will describe just a few of the most prominent proposals.

An early attempt to reconsider the distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasures was made first by Diano 1935 and later by Rist 1972; Wolfsdorf 2009 defended this interpretation more recently. This interpretation accepts that all sensory pleasures are kinetic—they are "events in which the perceptual or rational faculties are smoothly or gently stimulated or activated" (252). But, on this interpretation, katastematic pleasure—the well-balanced state of body and mind—is the necessary precondition for any kinetic pleasure. A person cannot experience kinetic pleasures in a part of himself unless that part

is in a pain- and disturbance-free state. Wolfsdorf explains, "perceptual pleasures [which are kinetic] reveal katastematic pleasures […] because perceptual pleasures depend on katastematic pleasures. The smooth functioning of the perceptual faculties indicates the correlative katastematic conditions" (245). Proponents of this interpretation focus on passages like *Principal Doctrine* 3, where Epicurus states, "As long as pleasure is present, so long as it is present, there is no pain, either of body or soul or both at once" (Wolfsdorf's translation, 246).[4] This interpretation allows for *aponia* and *ataraxia* to be fundamental (you can't have any pleasure without them), while still taking into account Epicurus' statements about the importance of sensory pleasures (since we need sensory pleasures to "reveal" the healthy state).

As an illustration, consider someone who is hungry. He is hungry, Lucretius explains (*DRN* 2.963–72), because certain parts of his body are disturbed and out of place and require replenishment to restore their integrity and functioning. So he eats. As he eats, he feels pleasure on his palate and throat (from tasting and swallowing the food) but that is only because *these* parts aren't disrupted. As the atoms from the food are absorbed into the body and the deficiency is remedied, the pain of hunger recedes. Wolfsdorf argues that the recession of hunger is not itself pleasurable, but it leaves us in a state that is free from pain and therefore capable of (kinetic) pleasure (252).

On this picture, then, katastematic pleasure is a state of healthy functioning, and it is a precondition for any pleasurable stimulation. Kinetic pleasure occurs when healthy, pain-free parts are "moved" and stimulated. What I've called "restorative pleasures," however, don't exist, because there can be no pleasure while parts being restored are still in pain.

This interpretation has a possible problem—since it assumes, with Cicero, that all sensory pleasures are kinetic, it suffers some of the same objections: If only kinetic pleasures have a sensory quality, what is attractive about the katastematic pleasure *in itself*? On the Diano-Rist-Wolfsdorf picture, it starts to look like we seek a well-balanced state merely as means to experience kinetic pleasures. Moreover, why call the katastematic state "pleasure"? Finally, Epicurus insists that all good and bad occur in sensation (*Ep. Men.* 124), so how do we *perceive* the goodness of *aponia* and *ataraxia*, if they have no sensory quality of their own? For these reasons, Gosling and Taylor 1982 argue for a different interpretation. They contend that, actually, *aponia* and *ataraxia are* states of sensory pleasure:

> *Aponia* is a condition of having sensory pleasures but with no accompanying pain, and *ataraxia* is the state of confidence that one may acquire such sensory pleasures with complete absence of pain. This confidence is itself a positive state.… What is important is to get a life of sensory pleasure untainted by pain.
>
> (371)

When a person is conscious in a healthy, well-balanced state, Gosling and Taylor explain, she naturally experiences a wide variety of positive sensations: she feels warm and comfortable; tastes foods; hears sounds; enjoys the sights of things around herself. These experiences are not kinetic, as Cicero or Wolfsdorf assume, but are themselves manifestations of katastematic pleasure. Distinctively kinetic pleasures, on their view, are merely the subset of sensory pleasures involved in restoration or replenishment (373). In fact, Gosling and Taylor believe that, for Epicureans themselves, the distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasures wasn't really that important. It does not mark two vastly different *kinds* of pleasures, since both are sensory. The categorization has more to do with a pleasure's functional role than its inherent qualities (374).

Arenson's recent book on Epicurean pleasure (Arenson 2019) updates and adds additional nuance to Gosling and Taylor's approach. She agrees that the Epicureans' main concern was with healthy functioning, and she traces Epicurus' ideas to debates in Plato's Academy, including Eudoxus and Aristotle, about the role of pleasure and healthy functioning in a good human life. Plato takes a strong anti-hedonist position: In the *Philebus*, Plato's Socrates argues that pleasure cannot be the good, because pleasure occurs only in the *process* of filling a deficiency (53c-55c). Therefore, pleasure itself isn't the good, but instead a means to a good end: healthy functioning.

According to Arenson, Epicurus introduces the distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasures in part to address these kinds of anti-hedonistic argument. Plato was right that some pleasures—kinetic pleasures—occur in the process of restoration, and these pleasures are indeed merely a means to a greater end. But, against the anti-hedonists, Epicurus argues that other pleasures—katastematic pleasures—arise from the healthy functioning itself. Arenson goes on to argue that katastematic pleasure itself has two manifestations: First, a general pleasurable quality of experience from having body and mind in a good state—a sort of non-specific pleasure of being alive, conscious, and healthy (Chapter 6). Second, there are pleasures that arise from specific activities of healthy faculties, including pleasures of seeing, hearing, and tasting. Arenson calls these "non-restorative pleasures," because while they involve active stimulation, they do not restore deficiencies, as happens when we eat while hungry or drink while thirsty (Chapter 8). Now, these two manifestations of katastematic pleasure are not really distinct; rather, in line with Epicurus' doctrine that the highest pleasure has a limit, the non-restorative pleasures merely "vary" but do not add to the general quality of life (*KD* 18).

Unless we discover new texts that settle the matter, we cannot be sure exactly what Epicureans had in mind. Nevertheless, I think that a charitable reading can provide a more defensible theory than Cicero's presentation allows. Note, first, that these interpretations agree that, although Epicureans usually describe their highest pleasure negatively (as freedom *from* bad states), they consider the state of being healthy, tranquil, and well balanced as *itself* a highly pleasurable state to be in. Rightly or wrongly, Epicureans thought that being alive and experiencing oneself as healthy, comfortable, and safe *feels* good, and being in this state is the precondition for really enjoying any activity or experience. No matter how intense appetite satisfactions can sometimes be, you can't really enjoy them if your attention is distracted by pain, stress, or anxiety.

So, although this Epicurean doctrine is sometimes described as implausible or *ad hoc*, I think it is an example of one of several ways Epicurus and his followers managed deep insights that many of their contemporaries failed to grasp. In a recent book, *The Pursuit of Unhappiness*, Haybron draws on literature on happiness from both psychology and philosophy to construct a nuanced picture of what it means to feel happy.[5] He argues that happiness has three dimensions: *endorsement*, which includes relatively transient feelings of joy and sadness that accompany gains or losses, successes or failures (Haybron 2008, 113); *engagement*, feelings of interest and psychological "flow" which most often occur when a person is fully engaged in a challenging activity performed well (114–15); and *attunement*, tranquility, a feeling of inner surety or confidence, stability and balance (116–17). The opposite of attunement, Haybron argues, is anxiety, alienation, and insecurity—feelings of not being safe and "at home" in the world (118–20). According to Haybron, it is a common modern mistake both for regular people and philosophers to pay too much attention to endorsement aspects of happiness and misery—those relatively fleeting feelings of cheer and excitement we get from eating a hamburger, buying a new car, or winning a prize. But though they are less noticeable and flashy, the fabric of a happy life depends much more on

engagement and, especially, attunement. A life filled with exciting moments and thrilling successes rings hollow if it is more broadly bored, disengaged, alienated, and filled with stress and anxiety (121–2).

I would suggest that the Epicureans understood this lesson, and that by defining the best experience of life as *aponia* and *ataraxia*, they aimed to capture something like this idea. Haybron's attunement dimension corresponds most closely to Epicurean katastematic pleasure: both refer to a fundamental state of healthy functioning, security, and freedom from disturbance that makes other kinds of enjoyment possible. Epicurus realized that when a person's mind and body are in a healthy, well-balanced state, it becomes possible for them to become engrossed in and enjoy a variety of different kinds of activities and experiences as expressions of that healthy state. Far from being *ad hoc*, then, Epicurus' idiosyncratic form of hedonism may simply have been the *right way* to think about what makes for a good experience of life.

How to Live as an Epicurean

According to Epicureans, therefore, the pleasure that matters for the best life is or arises from the healthy functioning of body and mind—katastematic pleasure. As Epicurus says, a person must "refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance, since this is the goal of a blessed life" (*Ep. Men*. 128). Her aim should be to arrange her life so that she achieves a secure expectation of everything she will need to keep her body and mind in a healthy, pain- and disturbance-free state, while removing or mitigating sources of physical pain and mental disturbance. The doctrines and therapeutic exercises Epicureans developed were directed toward these goals. Epicurus himself reportedly said,

> Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers no therapy for human suffering. For just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not give therapy for bodily diseases, so too there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the suffering of the soul.
>
> (Porphyry, *To Marcella* 31 = LS 25C)

This commitment to philosophical therapy is evident in the structure of many surviving texts, such as the *Letter to Menoeceus* and the *Principal Doctrines*.

From these texts, we see that a primary therapeutic objective was to identify and work to combat common and persistent fears, the kinds of anxieties that gnaw away at a person's peace of mind and make even an otherwise well-ordered life unhappy. Epicureans identified four core fears that must be addressed: fear about punishments from the gods; fear of death; fear of not having enough to be happy; and fear of pain. The first-century BCE Epicurean Philodemus summarized these points in his *tetrapharmakos*, or four-fold drug: "God presents no fears, death no worries. And while good is readily attainable, evil is readily endurable" (*Against the sophists* 4.9–14 = LS 25J). Epicurus fleshes out the same four points in the first four *Principal Doctrines.* Epicureans produced interesting and often controversial arguments meant to assuage these fears. (It is beyond the scope of this chapter to consider these arguments directly, but for more see Michael McOsker's chapter in the present volume.)

The second goal of Epicurean therapy was to provide tools to manage desires. The problem is that, through early experience and immersion in popular culture, people come to want things they do not really need, which disrupts their ability to live happily. Even worse,

Epicureans argue, excessive desires underlie and reinforce many of the chronic anxieties that plague human life. This connection is obvious in the case of the fear of not having enough—people falsely believe they don't have enough simply because they have the wrong idea about what enough would be (see *Vatican Saying* 68: "Nothing is enough for one for whom enough is little"). But Lucretius argued that even fear of death can be fueled by excessive desire. When a person's desires are insatiable, trying to fill them is like pouring water into a leaky pot, and he never feels like he ever has enough (*DRN* III.931–42; 1003–1010). As a result, he must always look to the future for his fulfilment and an end to anxious yearning. For such a person, death *would* appear the most frightful of evils because it cuts off that future. The person who dies is deprived of the chance to accumulate more and of reaching (so he thinks) what he has always grasped after.

To prevent this, a person must carefully examine, evaluate, and prioritize her desires: "It is appropriate to make all these decisions by comparative measurement and examination of the advantages and disadvantages" (*Ep. Men*. 130). *Vatican Saying* 71 offers a helpful test: "One should bring this question to bear on all of one's desires: what will happen to me if what is sought by desire is achieved, and what will happen if it is not?" Thinking about this question can illuminate whether a desire is worth pursuing or not. Suppose I'm craving a late-night cheeseburger. What happens if go out to a fast food restaurant and satisfy this desire? What if, instead, I have some carrot sticks and nuts here at home and go to bed? Thinking about it that way, I can decide whether or not that desire is necessary or helpful to me in living happily.

Epicurus produced a simple system for classifying desires to help his followers to make these reflections with a minimum of struggle. *Principal Doctrine* 29 explains:

> Of desires, some are natural and necessary, some natural and not necessary, and some neither natural nor necessary but occurring as the result of a groundless opinion.

According to the *Letter to Menoeceus*, the category of natural and necessary desires includes several sub-groups: "some are necessary for happiness and some for freeing the body from troubles and some for life itself" (*Ep. Men*. 127). Many of these desires are necessary because we must satisfy them to survive and avoid physical suffering; our bodies need food, water, and protection from extreme temperatures to function, and failing to attend to these needs inevitably causes pain. But some are necessary not because we die without them, but because we cannot be *happy* without them. A person won't die without healthy human friendships, but Epicurus would argue that he cannot be happy (see *KD* 28). To experience *eudaimonia*, one must arrange one's life to make sure these desires are taken care of.

The next category is the natural but unnecessary, or merely natural, desires. Epicurus explains, "The desires which do not bring a feeling of pain when not fulfilled are not necessary; but the desire for them is easy to dispel when they seem to be hard to achieve or to produce harm" (*KD* 26). That is, they are "unnecessary" because not fulfilling them causes no harm or pain. Instead, this category includes desires for *specific*, perhaps more luxurious ways to satisfy necessary desires, as well as natural desires from which we can safely abstain, like the desire for sex (see Annas 1993, 191–3; Cooper 1998, 503–6). It does no harm to enjoy these things, if they are easily available; they provide "variation" to one's pleasurable experience (*KD* 18; *SV* 21). But if they are unavailable, a wise Epicurean would let the desire go and satisfy their needs with simpler, more readily available things. As Epicurus puts it, barley cakes and water satisfy hunger and thirst just as effectively as

fancier cuisine (*Ep. Men* 131). Variation of pleasure, while naturally desirable, is not *necessary* for the highest pleasure and happiness that arises from a pain-free body and disturbance-free mind.

Desires in the last category—"neither natural nor necessary, but occurring as a result of a groundless opinion"—should be identified and eliminated. These are desires that, in the long run, cause more harm than good. Because they rest on "groundless opinion"—false beliefs absorbed from a corrupted culture—they have no limit and become insatiable. If you aren't careful, they can consume your life. The obvious example is the desire for wealth. It makes sense to desire some money. We desire security, and a person can use money to buy what he needs and solve a lot of life's problems (*KD* 14). This is what Epicurus calls "natural wealth" that is "both limited and easy to acquire" (*KD* 15). The problem comes when a person starts to see the accumulation of wealth as *itself* desirable. Then, no matter how much he has, it is never enough. I have a million dollars? But I could have two million! Or a billion! When the desire for wealth comes to be so untethered from natural desires, it escalates until it takes over the person's life. More than that, these desires drive people into stressful and destructive competition with each other, an endless rat race that no one wins (*KD* 21). *Vatican Saying* 25 puts it nicely: "Poverty, if measured by the goal of nature, is great wealth; and wealth, if limits are not set for it, is great poverty."

"Groundless opinions" also create dissatisfaction and unhappiness when people mistakenly treat luxurious variations of pleasure (objects of merely natural desires) as themselves necessary and crucial for their *eudaimonia*. Epicurus explains,

> Among natural desires, those which do not lead to a feeling of pain if not fulfilled and about which there is an intense effort, these are produced by a groundless opinion and they fail to be dissolved not because of their own nature but because of the groundless opinions of mankind.
>
> (*KD* 30)

This passage describes how merely natural desires (the ones that "do not lead to a feeling of pain if not fulfilled") transform into unnatural, harmful ones. This occurs when the person has a "groundless opinion" about his unnecessary, natural desire and therefore puts an "intense effort" into getting it. When this happens, the person causes great disturbance for no good reason. Suppose that I am going to my favorite restaurant, eagerly looking forward to my favorite meal, which I order during every visit. But when I arrive, I learn that dish is sold out. How should I react? I could calmly "dispel" my unnecessary desire for this particular thing and pick something else—I'd be just as happy and satisfied. Or, investing "intense effort" in this desire and refusing substitutions, I could get angry, yell at the server, and ruin the night for myself and everyone around me. Too often, people make themselves and other people miserable by taking the latter path.

Armed with these concepts, an Epicurean ensures a sustainably happy life of *aponia* and *ataraxia* by managing her life with practical wisdom [*phronēsis*], arranging things to ensure a steady supply of the objects of her natural and necessary desires, enjoying the satisfaction of merely natural desires when they are available, and eliminating or guarding against any unnatural, empty desires (*Ep. Men*. 132; *SV* 21). The goal is to achieve *self-sufficiency* [*autarkeia*], not by needing nothing (which Epicureans admit is impossible), but by insulating one's life as much as possible from the vicissitudes of fortune:

> We believe that self-sufficiency is a great good, not in order that we might make do with few things under all circumstances, but so that if we do not have a lot we can

> make do with few, being genuinely convinced that those who least need extravagance enjoy it most. […] Therefore, becoming accustomed to simple, not extravagant, ways of life makes one completely healthy, makes man unhesitant in the face of life's necessary duties, puts us in better condition for the times of extravagance which occasionally come along, and makes us fearless in the face of chance.
>
> (*Ep. Men.* 130–1; compare *KD* 16)

As Epicurus makes clear, this takes practice. An aspiring Epicurean must continually examine and habituate his desires, reinforcing the correct beliefs about what he needs for *eudaimonia* while cultivating an attitude of gratitude toward the abundant goods his life contains.

Notes

1 Julia Annas has an excellent explanation of the framework of ancient eudaimonist ethics in *The Morality of Happiness*, Chapter 1.
2 See Long and Sedley 1987, 123–5, for an explanation and defense of this interpretation
3 Wolfsdorf 2009 catalogues the range of positions taken.
4 Another key passage cited by Diano and Wolfsdorf comes from Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 4: Next comes pleasure from the flavor at the boundary of the palate. But when it has plunged right down through the throat, there is no pleasure while it is all spreading into the limbs. (4.627–9 = LS 21S) According to Wolfsdorf, this passage shows that the pleasure of eating comes only from stimulation of the (well-balanced) palate, not from the restoration of food being absorbed into the body.
5 Haybron distinguishes *happiness*—as a good psychological state—from a *good life*—a valuable, well lived life in a broader sense (2008, 29–31). As a hedonist, Epicurus holds that a good life *consists* of good states of one's subjective psychology, but many Greek and contemporary philosophers do not, as Haybron recognizes.

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25

EPICUREANS ON FRIENDSHIP, POLITICS, AND COMMUNITY

Anna B. Christensen

Epicurean beliefs about friendship, politics, and community incite a puzzling picture of Epicurean social relationships. On the one hand, Epicurus says that the wise will not engage in politics or even start families, but will instead isolate themselves from society (DL 10.119; *KD* 14; 551 *Us*.) On the other hand, Epicurus says that friendship is the most important way for human beings to live a good life (*KD* 27) and that the wise will prefer to live in a community of friends (*KD* 39). How can these two beliefs, which seemingly contrast so dramatically, make sense together in Epicurean philosophy?

In this chapter, I show how these two views offer insight into how the Epicureans seek to obtain their goal. Both views promote the Epicurean's ability to achieve tranquility. Politics is (usually) to be avoided because it disrupts tranquility; but the community of friends supports and strengthens the ability to reach tranquility, secure from the challenges that beset the traditional, non-Epicurean political community (*KD* 28). I proceed, first, by unpacking the Epicurean account of traditional community and politics before turning to friendship. I conclude by discussing how the Epicurean community of friends can provide the ideal structure to help the Epicurean live well.

The Traditional Political Community

Epicurus teaches that the goal of life is pleasure in the absence of physical pain and mental disturbance (*Ep. Men.* 131).[1] But becoming free of mental disturbance is tricky because many fears can disrupt a human being's tranquility, including fear of the gods, fear of death, and fears of other people and the natural elements. Epicurus maintains that fears of the gods and death are irrationally based on false assumptions and that, once these false assumptions are corrected, it is easier to live a tranquil life (*Ep. Men.* 124–6).[2] But the same mental therapy is not available to address fears of other people and nature, since these fears have a very rational basis. Yet Epicurus observes that it is necessary to be secure even from these fears to achieve true tranquility (*KD* 6, 7; *KD* 13 = *SV* 72).

Epicurus and his followers identify the desire for security as the reason why humans came together in social communities (*KD* 14). Before communities existed, people lived peacefully apart from each other, but they were decimated by exposure and animal predation (Lucr. *DRN* 5.982–1010; Porph. *De Ab*. 1.10.1). Banding together with other human beings enabled these early humans to protect themselves from such natural threats, and they

soon realized that they could more easily achieve tranquility in the company of others who would help with the work of obtaining food and providing protection.

Unfortunately, although establishing these communities protected community members from natural threats, it also opened them up to suffering violence from other human beings. For this reason, it became necessary to establish a method for living peaceably together. So, communities established conventions of justice by which they sought to avoid harming each other and being harmed (*KD* 37–8). According to Epicurus, justice is conventional in the sense that it depends upon what each community has found expedient to promote its stability and the safety of its citizens. For this reason, Epicurus denies that there is an absolute justice with conventions held in common across all societies and cultures; rather, each community adopts its own set of conventions based on its own unique circumstances (*KD* 33). Even so, all communities accept that some understanding of justice is essential for security.

In the earliest communities, people merely lived under a social compact, a set of implicit agreements not to harm one another in the expectation that other people would reciprocate that behavior (*KD* 31; Lucr. *DRN* 5.1018–20; Porph. *De Ab.* I.7.I-9.4). When that compact failed, communities instead established laws that more clearly defined codes of conduct and specified punishments for infractions. Members of communities agreed to live under these laws because they believed that doing so would best protect themselves from harm. However, since the fear of punishment motivates this protection, law can only exist at some cost to mental tranquility (*KD* 34; Lucr. *DRN* 5.1150–1155). Anyone who breaks the law will fear being caught and punished for their crimes (*KD* 35, *SV* 7). Even law-abiding citizens now have to expend effort to ensure that they act justly according to the law, knowing that if they do not, they too will be punished. Thus, while law can lessen some fears (viz., the fear that one will suffer harm), it also creates a new fear and cannot guarantee complete security. Therefore, it is not a perfect solution.

Epicurus writes that many people have tried to achieve better security by devoting themselves to the political life, imagining that doing so would give them additional protection in the form of wealth and prestige. But Epicurus avows that involving oneself in politics is a mistake (*KD* 7; *VS* 67). A later Epicurean, Lucretius, elaborates that people who think they will obtain freedom from fear by participating in politics will fail miserably (*DRN* 5.1117–35). Instead of achieving tranquility, they will acquire a host of new anxieties, including fears that someone may try to steal their political position and resentment towards others who hold a better position than they do. People will be better off if they do not try to make politics the bulwark for a secure life, but instead follow Epicurus' advice to isolate themselves from the traditional community and "live unnoticed" (551 *Us*.). Epicurus declares further that the wise will avoid all entanglements in political life (*VS* 58, *KD* 14), even forgoing marriage and having children (DL 10.119).[3] The reasoning behind this advice is likely that the Epicurean goal is more easily met if one avoids extra sources of anxiety. Since politics, marriage, and children are more apt to contribute anxieties rather than to eliminate them, one is better off avoiding these things.

However, Epicurus' advice to avoid these things is not absolute. In fact, Epicurus himself inherited guardianship of Metrodorus' children. Since Metrodorus was an Epicurean, and Epicurus' own will provides for the continued care of those children (DL 10.19–22), we have good evidence that children are not always to be avoided. Epicurus' will also stipulates that Metrodorus' daughter should be married to an appropriate member of Epicurus' school (DL 10.19), so marriage must be acceptable under some conditions (*cf.* DL 10.119).[4]

Special circumstances could also arise in which the Epicureans ought to participate in political activity. One occasion might be when political events threaten the Epicurean way of life, particularly by undermining the Epicurean's chances to achieve peace and security. Some

scholars have argued that Cassius, a Roman Epicurean, involved himself in politics contrary to Epicurus' directive because he found himself in such a situation (Mornigliano 1941; Griffin 1989). Perhaps he thought that Julius Caesar's dictatorship disrupted his ability to practice the Epicurean life, and so determined that he would be better off actively fighting against tyranny in politics rather than passively standing by. In addition, the Epicureans may sometimes need to navigate legal structures in order to safeguard their livelihood. Among other things, the Epicureans will require property for their community and school, and to obtain that, they will need to purchase and legally protect their land. As Epicurus notes, his followers are only free to be apart from traditional society once security from other human beings has been assured (*KD* 14). Consequently, Epicureans must occasionally seek legal recourse from the non-Epicurean community, if only to ensure that non-Epicureans do not disrupt their way of life.[5] Possibly because of these seeming inconsistencies, Seneca qualifies the Epicurean attitude towards politics by saying, "Epicurus affirms that the wise will not enter into politics unless something intervenes" (*De otio* 3.2).

Friendship

Under ordinary conditions, Epicureans believe that neither involvement in politics nor participation in a traditional community provides what is needed for a secure life. However, it may be that friendship can provide what politics and traditional community cannot. Friendship, Epicurus says, dances around the world, calling us all to awaken to happiness (*SV* 52), and the acquisition of friends is the most important way to ensure that we obtain our goal (*KD* 27). Moreover, Epicurus adds, when people who pursue the same goal live together, they can pass the most pleasant life in community with one another (*KD* 40).

Epicurus praises friendship so highly because he sees it as the best way to achieve security in an otherwise uncertain future (*KD* 28). Friends will provide financial aid to one another at need (*SV* 39). They will never betray each other, but will stand by each other, guarding each other's back. They will even die for each other if it becomes necessary (DL 10.120, *SV* 56). Cicero's Torquatus proclaims that friends strengthen each other's spirits and provide pleasure (*De Fin.* 1.66). Friends provide pleasure by offering material and emotional benefits. But Epicurus reveals that the feeling of confidence that a friend will provide assistance at need is even more important than the actual aid the friend provides (*SV* 34). Confidence that friends will help assuages fears of suffering future pains, and allows the Epicurean to live tranquilly (*cf. KD* 7, 14). Even though she may someday suffer pains and financial difficulties, she knows that her friend's assistance will minimize these pains. This idea fits well with Epicurus' insistence that short pains will be sharp and long pains dull (*KD* 4), as Epicurus himself notes in *KD* 28. Anxiety about the future will be greatly dulled by the promise of a friend's aid.

Objection 1: Friendship and Action

This glowing account of friendship has come under fire from critics who object that Epicurean philosophy cannot sustain true friendship. We often think that friendship requires one to do things for the sake of one's friends. On the face of it, that belief seems incompatible with Epicurean hedonism, the thesis that one should pursue one's own pleasure (*Ep. Men.* 129). Actions such as providing money, being loyal to, and dying for one's friends seem rather more painful than pleasant. Given that the Epicurean is ultimately interested in promoting her own pleasure, why should we believe that there is reason for her to do anything that benefits her friends?

One might say that the Epicurean would simply find it pleasant to know that she does the right thing for her friend. But this response does not succeed, because it suggests that the Epicurean is concerned with a standard of right and wrong beyond that of her own pleasure. Epicurus says that the Epicurean should relate every choice and every action to her own pleasure (*Ep. Men.* 128, *KD* 25). Therefore, even the action of helping her friends must be done because it brings her pleasure (*cf.* Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1111B).

A better response is that the Epicurean would find it pleasant to benefit her friend because doing so directly supports her own tranquility by increasing her confidence to face the future (*SV* 34, 39). In order to maintain that confidence, she will know that she must do what is necessary to keep her friends' trust, and that will include performing actions that benefit her friends. To see how this explanation would work, we might suppose that Epicurus, Metrodorus, and Idomeneus comprise one small group of friends. Metrodorus asks Epicurus to be his children's guardian when he dies. Accepting Metrodorus' request will undoubtedly cost Epicurus much time and money. However, if Epicurus refuses Metrodorus' request, the following things will happen. First, both Metrodorus and Idomeneus will think that Epicurus is an unfaithful friend and become less willing to trust him in the future. Second, because they are less willing to trust Epicurus, they will be less willing to aid Epicurus in the future if he needs assistance. That leads, finally, to Epicurus losing the confidence and security his friends had provided him to face his future. So, although it will cost something for Epicurus to aid Metrodorus, Epicurus is in fact better off if he helps, because he increases his friends' trust in him and makes it more likely that they will provide aid if he needs it. But, by not helping, Epicurus risks losing that security forever (*cf. SV* 57).[6] This explanation, far from countering Epicurus' hedonism, actually supports it.

This response will succeed even in cases that require larger sacrifices, such as dying for one's friend (DL 10.120). It is tempting think the cost of dying is too high, since it causes the one who dies to miss out on all future opportunities to experience pleasure—including pleasures that a friend might provide. But Epicurus has a ready response in his argument that "death is nothing" to us (*Ep. Men.* 124; *KD* 2). If death is truly nothing, then it has no value and so cannot be a significant sacrifice.[7] However, although the individual does not suffer anything terrible by dying for her friends, she may very well suffer something terrible if she does *not* die for them. She may lose the confidence and security they provided her to face her future since they will be less willing to help her. She is better off if she helps than if she were to live without that security (*cf. SV* 57).

Objection 2: Friendship and Altruism

The worry that the Epicurean will not act on behalf of her friends pales next to another criticism of Epicurean friendship. We often think that a true friend must love her friend for her friend's sake. But Epicurean hedonism seemingly requires the Epicurean to love her friends because those friends contribute to her own goal, and not for her friends' sakes (*Ep. Men.* 129). Cicero protests Epicurean friendship on precisely these grounds, exclaiming, "How can one be a friend to others without loving them in their own right?" (*De Fin*. 2.78). Cicero thinks that true friendship can only exist if one values a friend for the friend's sake, not for the sake of one's own self-interested pleasure and happiness.

Some scholars (e.g., O'Keefe 2001) respond by distinguishing what the Epicureans ultimately value from a behavioral policy. According to this theory, the Epicureans ultimately value one's own pleasure, and they recognize friendship as one of the best ways to obtain pleasure for oneself (*KD* 27). But they speak of valuing a friend for a friend's sake in behavioral terms. Epicurus could recommend acting as if one values a friend's pleasure

as much as one values one's own pleasure. The reason is that such behavior would contribute to having a stable relationship, which in turn would bring about the agent's own goal of pleasure.

This approach suggests that the final goal of an agent's actions would be her own pleasure, and that she would treat her friends as if their pleasure is also her goal. It is an attractive solution that, if effective, would explain away some of the egoism in Epicurean ethics. However, the approach faces a considerable challenge in Epicurus' thesis that one should relate every choice to one's own pleasure (*Ep. Men.* 128, *KD* 25). In other words, the ultimate standard of action is whether a proposed behavior promotes one's own goal. Epicurus' thesis effectively cuts out the idea that one would act as if one valued a friend's pleasure, since even actions on behalf of one's friend must be performed to advance one's own goal (*cf.* Plut. *Adv. Col*. 1111B).

Nevertheless, some scholars have insisted that Epicurus values friends not just as means to the end of one's own pleasure, but also as valuable in themselves (e.g. Mitsis 1987). As evidence, they point to *Vatican Sayings* 23, which is often translated as "All friendship, by itself, is choiceworthy, but it originates from its benefits."[8] But in order for this sentence to support the view that friends are valuable for their own sake, three points must be granted. First, one must reinterpret the sentence that all *friendship* is choiceworthy to mean that all *friends* are choiceworthy. This is not established, since it is entirely possible that a relationship could be choiceworthy without any corresponding value being ascribed to the persons involved in that relationship. Second, one must emend the only existing manuscript of the *Vatican Sayings*, which actually says, "All friendship, by itself, is virtue," *not* that all friendship is choiceworthy. However, accepting this emendation is problematic, given that the emendation would undermine the Epicurean thesis that pleasure alone is valuable and choiceworthy (*Ep. Men.* 129; Brown 2002: 76–8). Third, one must assume that Epicurus is the original author of the sentence, even though we know that some of the *Vatican Sayings* are attributed to other sources (Brown 2002: 78–9; O'Keefe 2001: 287–9). All told, we have little reason to interpret *SV* 23 as evidence that Epicurus valued friends for their own sakes.

Still, some scholars insist we have other evidence that Epicurus valued friends for their own sakes in the testimony of Cicero's Torquatus (Mitsis 1988: 98–128; Rist 1980). Torquatus testifies that the Epicureans had three different views of friendship (*De Fin.* 1.65–70). The first of these accounts (1.65–8) seems to be closest to Epicurus' own views, since Torquatus introduces and concludes it with quotations from Epicurus himself (as Cicero notes, 2.82). Strictly speaking, however, this first account only says 1) that some Epicureans think we enjoy our friends' pleasure as much as our own, and 2) that wise persons will be as inclined to act to secure a friend's pleasure as much as their own. But enjoying a friend's pleasure is not the same as enjoying the friend herself. Nor does this passage entail that the Epicurean wise person would necessarily act to secure her friend's pleasure for anything other than increasing her own pleasure (Brown 2002: 70–1; Evans 2004: 411–13; O'Keefe 2001: 289–97).

Of course, Cicero's Torquatus testifies that some Epicureans did indeed hold that friends are valuable for their own sakes. But Torquatus says that those Epicureans are "more timid" (1.69), suggesting that they do not share the original Epicurean (i.e., less timid) perspective. Cicero later claims that those Epicureans hold a "more recent" view (2.82), which indicates that those who accept what he calls the "more humane view" of valuing friends for their own sakes do not actually ascribe to Epicurus' original view. In order for more recent Epicureans to be more timid, earlier Epicureans must have existed who were less timid and who did not hold that friends are valuable for their own sakes.

Altogether, the evidence is against Epicurus valuing friends for their own sakes. Even if later Epicureans tried to value friends for their own sakes (as Cicero's discussion of "more recent" Epicureans suggests), Epicurus maintains that actions—including actions for one's friends—are performed because they contribute to one's own pleasure (*Ep. Men.* 128–9; *cf.* Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1111B). Because of this egoism, some might want to reject Epicurus' account of friendship, judging that it is unconscionable to love friends in this way. However, it is worth considering whether the Epicurean notion is as reprehensible as it may first appear.

We have a couple thoughts to bear in mind. First, although Epicurus emphasizes friendship's egoistic benefits, he is also clear that these benefits are not the only things that one should consider in a relationship. Epicurus warns that friendship can go wrong if one becomes obsessed with the benefits one gets to the exclusion of all else. Someone who thinks only of the benefits they enjoy from friendship is not a true friend, but rather someone who engages in petty trade. Nevertheless, in the same passage, Epicurus also cautions against ignoring the benefits a friend can give because doing so causes one to miss out on hope for the future (*SV* 39). One must strike a balance. It is unclear how much Epicurus thinks one should consider other things. But it is certainly not the case that the Epicurean fixates *only* on the benefits she enjoys from the friendship.

Second, it is essential to recognize that the relationship is not one-sided. Plutarch remarks that the Epicureans believe it is more pleasurable to confer a benefit than to receive one (*Non Posse* 1097A). This sentiment suggests that friends will benefit each other for the goal of their own pleasure, even while doing so provides them with greater pleasure than receiving benefits would provide. It should also be noted that the benefits of friendship are reciprocal since friendship can only provide security if all parties in the relationship enjoy the same benefits from one another (*cf. SV* 57). So, although the Epicurean will receive benefits from the relationship, her friends will presumably also receive the same benefit of security *from her*. Thus, while Epicurean friendship is necessarily egoistic, it is not the case that one friend enjoys benefits purely at another's expense. These considerations may not completely silence the concerns of Epicurean egoism, but they can lessen their potency and explain how this account makes sense in the context of Epicurean philosophy.

Objection 3: Friendship and Security

We have seen that the Epicureans value friendship because they think it promotes tranquility. But are they correct to make that claim? A final objection to the Epicurean view of friendship is that opening oneself up to another human being comes with associated risks. Not only might one be called on to provide material aid or suffer pains for one's friend (*SV* 28), but also the dependence on one's friend might make one vulnerable in other ways. Some critics suggest that involvement with another person may undermine one's tranquility by leaving one susceptible to the loss of one's virtue or to the death of one's friend.

The fear that the obligations of friendship may threaten one's virtue (Cic. *De Amicitia* 12.40, 13.44; Rist 1980: 128–9) could seem immaterial given that Epicurus' primary concern is pleasure, not virtue. But Epicurus insists that virtue is tied with living a pleasant life: "It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and well and justly without living pleasantly" (*KD* 5; *cf.* DL 10.138). If friendship threatens one's virtue, it stands to reason that it also threatens one's pleasure.

However, in the *Disputed Questions*, Epicurus reportedly asked whether the wise person would always act justly and obey the law. Epicurus' answer is unclear, indicating only that

providing a definite response is difficult (Plut., *Adv. Col.* 1127d = F18). But the question is especially vexing when it comes to friendship. None of Epicurus' extant writings address whether the wise person will commit injustice for a friend. Unfortunately, the way Epicurus treats justice and friendship allows that this may occur. Epicurus says that doing injustice is not bad for its own sake, but only for its (bad) consequences, in particular, the fear that one will be punished (*KD* 34; *cf.* Lucr. *DRN* 5.1151). If it were possible to commit injustice with the assurance that one would never be punished, the Epicurean would have no reason not to act unjustly. Moreover, if doing injustice could contribute to one's own pleasant life, one would in fact have positive reason to act unjustly.

The first response Epicurus can offer to this concern is that the unjust person can never have complete assurance that she will not be caught and punished. Even if she has gotten away with her crimes ten thousand times, he says, the criminal would fear punishment until the day of her death (*KD* 35 = *SV* 6). Since the constant fear of detection would make a pleasant life impossible, the wise person should realize that it is in her best interest not to commit injustice, and would abstain.

However, the critic might respond that this is not enough to keep the Epicurean from doing injustice for her friends. After all, the benefits she receives from committing injustice might well outweigh the cost of fearing punishment. But Epicurus has a ready response in his insistence that living well requires living justly (*KD* 5, *Ep. Men.* 132; Cic. *De Fin*. 1.50–54, 57). Epicurus insists that the just life is free of the greatest disturbance while the unjust life is full of the greatest disturbance (*KD* 17). Since laws exist to promote security in society, the wise will know that following the law contributes to peace and order and will make the wise person's life more secure. So, although she might contemplate doing injustice (as Epicurus' response in *Disputed Questions* may suggest[9]), she most likely will not commit injustice, since that would grossly undermine her security.

So much for threat number one. What of threat number two, that friendship makes one vulnerable to loss caused by a friend's death? This concern is more troubling. Epicurus' argument that death is nothing to us (*Ep. Men.* 124; *KD* 2) only addresses our fears of our own deaths. The argument does not address fears we may have about our loved ones dying. Of course, if the argument is correct, we need not worry that our friends will suffer anything terrible when they are dead. If death is nothing dreadful to us, then it ought to be nothing dreadful for anyone else either. However, because we rely on our friends for our future security and peace of mind (*KD* 27; *VS* 39), we can worry that their deaths could seriously undermine our own tranquility by making us vulnerable to fears of future harms (O'Connor 1989: 175–7; Rist 1980: 127–9).

Epicurus' response to this concern is surprising. He says that we should not mourn our friends' deaths, but should instead take their deaths as opportunities to reflect upon their lives and time with us (*SV* 66; *cf. KD* 40). "The memory of a dead friend is sweet," he says, indicating that the power of memory can overcome grief (Plut. *Non Posse* 1105E = 213 *Us.*). The joy provided by past memories is pleasant, and Epicurus believes that it ensures that we can still carry on and even continue to live happily in our friend's absence.

Epicurus' strategy is to focus on the past benefits a deceased friend provided rather than the future loss one may suffer because of that friend's death. We may well wonder whether this argument is psychologically effective. But, like Epicurus' other arguments about death, the response is meant to help the Epicurean achieve mental tranquility. Grief is a proven disruptor of tranquility, so if one can employ a mental technique to assuage such pain, one ought to do so.

Epicurus himself appears to have practiced the same strategy to great effect. In a letter he wrote on the day of his death, Epicurus notes that, although he is in incredible pain, the

pleasant memory of his past conversations with his friend, Idomeneus, helps him tranquilly endure: "My continual sufferings from strangury and dysentery are so great that nothing could augment them, but over against them all I set gladness of mind at the remembrance of our past conversations" (DL 10.22). His words suggest that one can maintain a state of pleasure even when one endures horrific pains.[10] If this notion is plausible, then one could certainly take pleasure in remembering past experiences even when one's friend has died.

Epicurus' will also supports the expected power of memory to overcome grief. Epicurus stipulates that his followers should celebrate his memory on his birthday every year (DL 10.18). He follows this instruction with directions that they should likewise commemorate Metrodorus, Polyaenus, and Epicurus' brothers—all of whom preceded Epicurus in death. The directions indicate that the members of the Epicurean school are to greet their friends' deaths with reflection, not lamentation, just as Epicurus has said. They can experience pleasure in their memories of loved ones who have died, and in that memory, they can find tranquility.

It adds credibility to Epicurus' response to recognize that the Epicureans believe that whole communities share in friendship together (see The Epicurean Community, below). The Epicurean need not fear the death of a single friend because she will have a whole community of friends to help support her tranquility. Thus, when one member of the community dies, the whole community can celebrate their shared friend's memory together. Memorializing the friend then becomes an occasion to solidify the bonds of friendship among the whole community (*KD* 40), rather than an occasion for solitary grief.

The Epicurean Community

The Epicureans insist that one should cultivate a community of friends who live together apart from the rest of society (*KD* 39). We know that the earliest Epicureans lived together in the Garden, Epicurus' school outside Athens' walls, where they shared the work of surviving and philosophizing together. But why should Epicurus recommend such a community of friends above the traditional Greek community?

In his will, Epicurus describes Hermarchus and other members of the Epicurean school as those "who have grown old with us in philosophy," "rendered service to us in private life," and "shown us friendship in every way" (DL 10.20).[11] These descriptions tell us three fundamental details about life in the Epicurean community. First, they show that the Epicurean community is also a community of friends, for those who are involved in the community have shown friendship to one another in the past. Second, they show that this community is based on individuals providing service to one another, which reiterates the idea that Epicurean friendship is based on benefits that friends provide (*cf. SV* 23, DL 10.120). Finally, the description shows that an essential benefit that this community provides is enabling its members to grow together through the shared study of philosophy.

A later Epicurean, Philodemus, describes the philosophical practice that should take place in this community. True friends, he says, are those who engage in mutual correction and evaluation of each other's progress (*On Frank Criticism.*, fr. 50; *cf.* DL 10.120). Philodemus ranks this evaluation more highly than the material benefits that friendship provides: "Even if we demonstrate logically that, although many fine things result from friendship, there is nothing as grand as having one to whom one will say what is in one's heart and who will listen when one speaks" (fr. 28). For Philodemus, philosophical dialogue among friends is more important than even monetary benefits friends offer one another. By engaging in dialogue, friends will correct each other's intellectual errors, a process that will help each member to eliminate their own false beliefs and anxieties. Therefore, the friends

are more likely to achieve freedom from fear because of this relationship, which means they are more likely to achieve the Epicureans' philosophical goal of peace and tranquility.

Epicurus communicates ample reason to think that the Epicurean community offers better security to its members than does the traditional community because it differs from the traditional community in three important respects. First, it differs in that its members believe that it can better achieve its goal by philosophizing together. Epicurus says that friends will care for each other's characters as much as their own (*SV* 15), and that they will seek to practice their Epicurean beliefs together (*Ep. Men.* 135).[12] They believe that, if the whole community intentionally searches for the same goal, then it is more plausible that each member can achieve that goal (*KD* 40, *cf. Ep. Men.* 127, 135). This practice benefits the Epicurean community by ensuring that its members are better equipped to eliminate anxieties that keep them from tranquility.

A second way that the Epicurean community is unlike the traditional community is that its membership is not limited to free male citizens. Rather, membership is open to all rational beings who pursue the same goal. So, a significant improvement over the traditional community is that the Epicurean community is more egalitarian, and does not exclude a sizeable chunk of the human population. Women, non-Greeks, and slaves could all become members of the Epicurean community. This egalitarianism benefits the community by bringing in more human beings—potential friends—who can share in the work of promoting security.[13]

The Epicurean community of friends is like the traditional community in that it too seeks the security of its members. But this shared objective leads to the third difference. The Epicurean community, says Epicurus, would differ in its conventional usage and application of justice. This assertion might seem surprising. Given Epicurus' insistence that living well requires living justly, we should think that the Epicurean community would be full of justice. But justice, Epicurus says, is purely a matter of conventional methods to avoid harm and, as such, is subject to each society's unique circumstances (*KD* 31, 33, 36–8). In a traditional community, the conventions of justice are evident in laws that promote security because they threaten lawbreakers with punishment for their offences (*KD* 34, Lucr. *DRN* 5.1151). As noted above, the system is only partly successful. It also provides yet another anxiety-inducing concern in the threat of punishment.

The Epicurean community has the potential to avert these failures. In a perfect Epicurean community—one of wise men and women—there would be no reason for community members to harm one another. Each member would pursue the goal of pleasure, and would realize that causing harm would only undermine their security, while refraining from causing harm would increase their security (*KD* 17; *cf.* Porph. *De Ab.* I.7.I-9.4). Thus, neither law nor punishment would be needed because wise Epicurean friends would peacefully coexist in the practice of their Epicurean beliefs. Since justice is nothing more than the convention of not harming and being harmed, then the Epicurean community—where no one harms each other—will display perfect justice.[14] It simply will not need laws and the threat of punishment for justice to reign supreme. Of course, this benefit may not apply to an *imperfect* Epicurean community where members are only striving to become (but are not yet) wise. Even so, the Epicurean perspective suggests that the community of friends is at least in theory able to achieve the security that the traditional community can only dream of accomplishing.

Altogether, the Epicurean community stands as an attractive alternative to the traditional community. However, its functional ability is somewhat limited. The fact that the Epicurean community has to exist in the real world restricts its philosophical practice and benefits. The work of surviving—obtaining food, water, and shelter—takes time and energy away

from philosophical pursuits (Diogenes of Oenoanda, new fr. 21.I.4–14, 2.10–14). The Epicureans also need some property in order to have a physical location for their philosophical community, and they therefore need the legal means to protect their property from those outside their community (Brown 2009: 181–2). So, although they seek to live apart from others, they must occasionally have dealings with the non-Epicurean community. The best they can do is band together for mutual protection and security with other Epicureans. By forming a community of friends pursuing the same goal together, the Epicureans seek to enjoy the best life in each other's society (*KD* 40). In this way, they can follow Epicurus' advice to practice philosophy (*Ep. Men.* 127, 135) and better achieve tranquility in the company of like-minded friends.

Conclusion

The Epicurean account of friendship, politics, and community is a complex narrative. Though Epicurus recommends that his followers live apart from society and be "unnoticed," he also recommends that they live in communion with other Epicureans. Epicurus says that his followers should exercise themselves in their Epicurean beliefs by day and night, both by themselves and with those who are like them (*Ep. Men.* 135). By engaging in this practice—and especially by doing so in the company of friends who share their beliefs—they can achieve tranquility and live a secure, pleasant life. If friendship can do all that, it is no wonder why Epicurus would praise it as the most important way to achieve a good life.

Notes

1 For more information on the Epicureans' goal, see Rider's "Epicureans on Pleasure, Desire, and Happiness" in this volume.
2 Epicurus argues that the gods are not so terrifying if it is believed that they take no interest in human affairs (and hence will not punish humans for their actions or for imagined slights). Similarly, death is not as frightening if it is agreed 1) that no one survives death to be affected by it either positively or negatively and 2) no one should fear something happening in the future if it isn't bad for one when it occurs (*Ep. Men*. 124–6; *KD* 2). For more information, see Austin, "Epicureans on Sense-Experience and the Fear of Death" in this volume.
3 Having family was widely assumed to be a fundamental way a citizen might contribute to their *polis*. We might consider how Socrates' children stand as a sign of his relationship with Athens (*Crito* 52c). See Brennan 1996; Chilton 1960.
4 This union is possibly acceptable only because both members of the marriage would be associated with the Epicurean school. This explanation is suggested by Epicurus' requirement that Metrodorus' daughter must continue to be obedient to the head of the school in order for an appropriate marriage to be arranged (DL 10.19). For further discussion, see Arenson 2016: 291–311 and Brennan 1996: 348–50.
5 I agree with Brown 2009: 181–2, who also points out that the advice to avoid politics must sometimes be circumvented.
6 Brown 2009: 185–6 suggests a similar response about how Epicureans would continue to do things for friends who become unable to reciprocate, e.g., if the friend becomes destitute or disabled.
7 See also O'Connor 1989: 177–81; O'Keefe 2001: 303.
8 Translation of this sentence is fraught with difficulty. See discussion below.
9 The text is unclear, and Epicurus does not give us a definitive answer. It is therefore unlikely that the Epicurean would act unjustly, but it is not impossible. On this puzzle, see Vander Waerdt 1987; Roskam 2012.
10 The story recalls the Epicurean belief that the sage can have pleasure even when being tortured on the rack (DL 10.118; *VS* 47; Cic. *De Fin.* 1.62–3). The claim that a person can have mental

tranquility even when facing extreme pain seems inconceivable, yet the Epicureans held that mental therapy could be effective even in such conditions. Clearly, the sage cannot achieve physical painlessness—even Diogenes Laërtius notes that the sage will shriek and groan on the rack (10.118)—but perhaps it is credible to think that one could mentally overcome the pain.

11 See Leiwo and Reimes 1999, who argue that this means that Epicurus thought of his students as his heirs.

12 Some scholars have said that this passage provides evidence of altruism in Epicurean ethics (e.g. Mitsis 1987). But we should note that the claim of caring for a friend's *character* as much as for one's own differs from saying that one cares for the *friend* as much as for oneself. The former indicates only that the Epicurean friend takes precautions regarding a friend's virtue. Doing so is compatible with the Epicurean goal of obtaining her own pleasure (*Ep. Men.* 129). Insofar as virtue is required to live pleasantly (*KD* 5, DL 10.138), and friends help oneself to achieve security and live pleasantly (*KD*27), watching out for a friend's character is a perfectly reasonable thing to do. The Epicurean has a much better chance of reaching her own goal if her friends are not holding her back with their vices.

13 Exactly how far this egalitarianism extends may be disputed. Diogenes Laërtius reports that Epicurus believed some ethnic groups or bodily constitutions are ill-suited to become wise (DL 10.117).

14 Hence it is possible to respond to the sometimes-offered objection that the Epicurean community would not be just. See also Brown 2009: 191–6.

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26

THE MEDICINE OF SALVATION

Epicurean Education as Therapy

Michael McOsker

> Vain is that philosopher's argument by which no human suffering is cured. For just as there is no benefit from medicine which does not expel the illnesses of bodies, so not even from philosophy, unless it expels the suffering of the soul.
> Epicurus fr. 221 Us.[1]

Epicurus, as the epigraph shows, subordinated the work of philosophy to its goal of helping people live better—calmer and more pleasant—lives. The parallel between medicine's concern for the body and philosophy's concern for the soul already had a long history by Epicurus' day, but he and his successors developed it in some striking ways.[2]

The basic Hippocratean idea underlying the comparison is that nature is not simply "the way things are without corrupting human interference," but that this state is somehow correct and ought to be (re)obtained. On this view, "'[n]ature' is a normative concept, what is normal and good for humans. The natural state is the state of good health" (Jouanna 1999, 334–7), and so illnesses and wounds are deviations from that correct standard. For Epicurus, the case is similar: the life "in accordance with nature" [*kata phusin*] is good; the one contrary to nature [*para physin*] is bad; and the goal of philosophy is to restore people to their natural, normal and good states of physical and psychological health. Peace of mind [*ataraxia*] is famously the main goal of the Epicurean life, and to reach it, he developed a number of techniques which philosopher-therapists used for the treatment [*therapeia*] of their student-patients. If, Torquatus asks (Cic. *De Fin.* I.59), physical discomforts impede the good life, how much worse are mental pains? Most of this chapter will be a discussion of these techniques, but before that, I will lay out a summary of the presuppositions that underlie the conception of philosophy as a therapeutic practice. This is not the only possible way to understand Epicureanism philosophy—e.g. it is not a useful guideline for understanding Epicureanism as practiced by children brought up in the school, who were never taught the false beliefs that infected others, and consequently have no need of therapeutic intervention.[3] A religious model is also possible. But the therapeutic model is useful for adults who come to the school with certain wrong beliefs already inculcated and negatively affecting their lives.

Martha Nussbaum described ten aspects of the medical-model of philosophy.[4] The general presuppositions that therapeutic arguments have are:

i Practical causal efficacy: most important is that the argument actually bring the student closer to health (cf. *Ep. Men*. 122 and 135, *Ep. Pyth*. 84, and *Ep. Hdt.* 83, as well as Lucretius I.931–50 and Diogenes of Oenoanda fr. III Smith).
ii Value-relativity: therapeutic arguments must respond to the beliefs and desires that the patient already has. They may have the goal of radically reshaping those beliefs and desires, but they must be responsive to the patient's initial condition (see below).
iii Responsiveness to the particular case: humans are philosophically ill in similar ways, but the differences are important as well. Some classes of people, like women, the elderly, or those with a predominance of fire atoms in their souls, will act similarly, but this does not obscure their individuality (see below).

Additionally, the arguments…

iv Are directed at the health of the individual, rather than a community or the individual *qua* part of a community.
v Use practical reason solely as an instrument.
vi Have no respect for consistency, validity, clarify in definition, but consider them instrumentally useful, as aids to communication or effective argumentation.
vii Produce an asymmetry of roles: the doctor is authoritative and the patient is subordinate.[5]
viii Have no interest in other philosophical views.
ix–x The arguments are self-praising for their efficacy and necessity, and serve, in part, to encourage the student.

Some of these statements need qualification; our knowledge of Epicureanism has advanced a great deal since Nussbaum wrote. For instance, there apparently was study of other philosophers in the Epicurean school and Epicurus had a well-reasoned motivation for discarding the use of definitions.[6] His demand for clarity (fr. 54 Us.) in exposition was well-known in antiquity (though he was mocked for violating it). Epicurus was evidently willing to accept his students' arguments and be put on their level (cf. Metrodorus in *De Nat*. 28 with Sedley 1973 and Leonteus *apud* Plut. *Adv. Col*. 1108E-F). Practical reason [*phronēsis*] may be just an instrument, but it is by far the most important one, second only to philosophy (cf. *Ep. Men*. 132 with Heßler *ad loc.* and De Sanctis 2010). One suspects that ix) and x), already collapsed into one by Nussbaum, are purely stylistic. Other nuances will be mentioned below.

I would also add a different point of emphasis: Epicurus' philosophy did not treat physics and ethics separately. Rather, he explicitly derived ethical positions from the conclusions of physics (cf. *KD* 12). For instance, the mortality of the soul is based in his atomism, and this connection grounds some of his arguments against fearing death and the gods—the two most damaging fears in Epicurus' diagnosis (cf. *Ep. Hdt*. 81 and Warren 2009). Since no part of you will survive your death, you cannot be tortured or rewarded in the hereafter by fickle tyrants that demand superstitious worship and costly sacrifices for trivial sins.

The impression that Epicurus would deploy any argument so long as it convinced the patient is mistaken; he had very well-defined views on almost every question in ethics and physics, and made physics itself a therapeutic tool. False beliefs are like a plague which spread from person to person, and it is the Epicurean's duty to come to the aid of humanity and to be their ally (*epikourein*, a delightful pun, cf. Diogenes of Oenoanda fr. 3.IV.3-V.8 Smith); Epicurean philosophy is "the drugs of salvation" (my title, V.14-VI.2) because it teaches *correct* beliefs, from which healing flows. The totality and coherence of the system was reciprocally

reinforcing and helped guarantee each facet. Both physics and ethics, guided by canonic, contribute to the ultimate goal of *ataraxia*. The single goal, which is the life according to nature (understood normatively, not descriptively), means that all of Epicurus' arguments tend in the same direction. The whole of Epicurus' *On Nature*—in fact, everything he wrote—can be read therapeutically, and, as Michael Erler noted (1993: 294), the study of physics has the same goal as the study of ethics: achieving *ataraxia*. This is parallel to Hippocrates' position that knowledge of the whole of nature is required to treat any given illness adequately (reported by Plato, *Phaedrus* 270c-d). Without suitable and sufficient background knowledge, the individual case cannot be diagnosed and treated correctly.[7]

The whole system is complicated and this alone would justify the use of various abridgements, summaries, and collections of dicta, but there is a second reason for their use. Just as Epicurus recognized the unconscious, he also realized that some behaviors and beliefs might be invulnerable to cognitive therapy *via* philosophical argument, as Nussbaum (1994: 154) noted. Philodemus, in his *On the Gods* I, col. 24.20–34, calls some fears "latent and unarticulated" (ὕπουλοι καὶ ἀδιαρθρωτότεροι, literally "festering and quite unanalyzed"—note the medical term) and Diogenes of Oenoanda (fr. 35.II.4 Smith) talks about an "obscure" [ἀτρα[νής or ἄτρα[νος] fear, which occurs when the mind is occupied with something else and insinuates itself into our nature and lurks there.[8] The idea seems to be that these fears are not visible from the surface, as it were, but malignantly lurk out of sight, causing damage unnoticed. But, *pace* Nussbaum, this is not "disappointing;" rather, it shows deep insight into how humans actually behave and change habits—we are rarely as rational and reasons-responsive as we would like. The most important text is *SV* 18: "erotic suffering is ended by the removal of sight and conversation and meeting," i.e. "out of sight, out of mind," just as Lucretius suggests at 4.1063–67.[9] Philodemus suggests the technique of "relabeling"—calling an attractive thing by an unattractive name, e.g. dying gloriously in battle becomes "getting slaughtered like cattle"—in his *On Death*, at 28.37–29.2 and 33.21–2; this is the reverse of Lucretius' procedure at 4.1157–70.[10] The philosopher-therapist, like the doctor, is licensed to arouse reasonable fear by setting the bad consequences of a course of action before the eyes of his students. This technique is common enough to have a technical term: "setting before the eyes."[11] By providing an alternative course of action—guided by Epicurus' teaching—he can help his students escape their fates.

Epicurus comes armed with a complete philosophical system which is ultimately in the service of healing his students. They must learn facts about reality, and that from these facts flow certain conclusions which release them from their superstitious fears—in fact, knowledge of physics is pointless *per se*, it is only useful as a tool for ethics (cf. *Ep. Hdt*. 78–9, *Ep. Pyth* 85–7).[12] Meanwhile, they undergo cognitive therapy—philosophical argumentation—and behavioral therapy, both aim at removing false beliefs and empty desires and at inculcating correct beliefs and natural desires. Ultimately, the student makes progress towards a real, durable happiness which is like that of the gods.

An emblem of the relationship between medicine and philosophy is the Epicureans' use of an abridgment of the first four sayings in the *Kyriai Doxai*: this already brief summary was shortened further into the *Tetrapharmakos*, the "Four-Ingredient Drug," recorded by Philodemus in *PHerc*. 1005, col. 5 Angeli: "god is no reason to fear, death is no reason to worry, and pleasure is easy to get, while pain is easy to endure."[13] The name was borrowed from remedies for inflammation.

Details

Now we will turn to examine several Epicurean tactics in detail. Because of the textual situation, evidence from several different Epicureans—Epicurus himself, but also his

followers Philodemus and Lucretius—will be grouped together thematically. The first section will treat, by way of example, topics drawn from the world of physics that have ethical ramifications, as well as Lucretius' account of psychic dispositions and Philodemus' diatribic therapy. The point is to see the close connection, which flows in both directions, between physics and ethics. The second section will treat diagnosis and treatment of individual cases. The Epicureans had a wide variety of tools available, which they could use subtly. The final section will be a description of Philodemus' *On Frank Speech*, a sort of teacher's manual for Epicureans which discusses a number of therapeutic techniques.

Physics: Fears and Dispositions

Epicurus' *Letter to Pythocles*, which discusses meteorology, is one of the main documents to discuss fears caused by natural phenomena. In it, we see a major Epicurean therapeutic technique: adequate physical explanations of natural phenomena remove them from the realm of the divine. For instance, Epicurus (*Ep. Pyth*. 94) offers three possible explanations of the phases of the moon, and Lucretius (5.705–50) gives several more—but none allows Selene to be a goddess. Contemporary research science could not pronounce conclusively on many of these topics, which left room for uncertainty and the terrors of mythology. Consequently, Epicurus developed a technique of multiple explanation to provide a defensive battery against these fears.[14] When people believe that the gods express their anger through thunderstorms, it can be immensely calming to learn otherwise, that thunder and lightning are simply phenomena that occur under certain natural conditions. Consider Theophrastus' superstitious man—how much better off he'd be with correct beliefs about nature![15]

Beliefs and the fears consequent on them are one thing, but more fundamental are our dispositions, which for Epicureans are atomic structures in our souls. Our major account of the relationship between souls and personalities is in *De Rerum Natura* 3.288–306, where Lucretius discusses rather schematically the results of several atomic imbalances: an excess of fire atoms causes irascibility, cold wild causes timidity and flightiness, and air causes placidity. The corresponding defects also cause problems: a lack of fire atoms makes people unable to get angry when appropriate. Lucretius' account is indebted to discussions in Epicurus' *On Nature*, probably around book 25, three copies of which are partly extant in the Herculaneum papyri. That book treats the development of moral responsibility on the atomic level. We are born with a certain atomic constitution, but this changes over time under a variety of influences—our upbringings and educations are chief among them—and eventually we become responsible for our own actions.[16] Lucretius (3.307–22, the continuation of the passage just discussed) says that philosophical education [*ratio, doctrina*] can have a major influence on our atomic make-ups, though it cannot completely eradicate our natal constitutions.

Later Epicureans had several tools available for this kind of educational treatment, but one of the most notable was the therapeutic diatribe. Several examples are preserved in Lucretius (against love and fear of death) and Philodemus (against empty anger and fear of death), and the latter, in his *On Anger*, gives us part of a theoretical justification for their use: a well-targeted diatribe can stop a person in the midst of their anger and make them reconsider their foolish actions and the consequences that are likely to follow.[17] The technique was evidently borrowed by Basilides and Thespis in the early second century BCE from Chrysippus and Bion of Borysthenes, its pioneers.[18] We cannot now tell why Bion was cited (perhaps he was an innovator in diatribe-form), but Chrysippus' *Therapeutikon* is mentioned specifically, the semi-stand-alone fourth book of his *On Emotions* (*Peri Pathōn*),

a.k.a. the *Ethikon*. This book, written without obtrusive Stoic technical terms, propounded a method for intervening in fits of strong emotion and heading them off, just as Philodemus believes possible. Philodemus' diatribe is shot through with medical terminology; this too is an inheritance from Chrysippus, as Tieleman (2003, 142–57) shows: Chrysippus considered the emotions to the be the symptoms of an underlying psychological illness, which, just as the soul is physical, was also a physical problem. All of this could have been taken over by the Epicureans with only little modification. Epicurean treatment aims at deep-seated, negative aspects of peoples' selves and strives to change them physically, on the atomic level. An irascible person, after treatment, has fewer fire atoms in her soul, and consequently her anger is less often empty and more often "natural"—Philodemus' word for anger correctly felt.

A correct understanding of the soul and its dispositions was essential for the psychological treatment that Epicureanism is famous for, just as a thorough knowledge of basic biology is required for modern doctors. This detailed, general account of the soul grounds and allows individual treatment. "Irascibility" is, in one sense, a physical fact which Epicurean therapists treat psychologically, with praise and blame. We do not easily think that a physical defect can be cured with ethical harangues or psycho-therapy, but for the Epicureans, physics and philosophical therapy were very closely connected because the talk has a physical effect on our souls.[19]

Individual Diagnosis and Treatment

Much of therapeutic philosophy's work, diagnosing and treating individual cases, is invisible to us, probably because in large part it was conversational and so never preserved in writing. Nonetheless, we have some evidence for how diagnosis and treatment of individual cases were handled. It will emerge that Epicurean practice was quite flexible and respectful of individual cases and situations, as we should expect given their account of the soul and dispositions. Voula Tsouna (2007: 52–73) explores the empirical background of these types of treatments, and suggests parallels with the Empirical school of medicine; indeed, as Philip and Estelle DeLacy (1978: 165–82) show, medicine was the first and paradigmatic form of empirical inquiry and played an important role in later empirical systems, including that of Epicurus, and later members of the school stayed in touch with innovations in medical teaching.[20]

Some flexibility was built into the system on the level of doctrine. Although Diogenes Laertius (10.119–120) records a lengthy series of prohibitions and commandments, this represents a much-reduced summary of more nuanced doctrines. The usual example is the case of politics. Diogenes reports simply that "the sage will not engage in politics," and Epicurus had a slogan λάθε βίωσας [live unnoticed] to symbolize his doctrine. Unfortunately, several of his immediate followers were active in politics, as later would be Cassius, one of Caesar's assassins, and Caesar himself. The solution, as argued at length by Roskam (2007) and Fish (2011) is that political activity is not wholly banned, just discouraged generally. I call this the "according to life circumstance" [κατὰ περίστασιν βίου] proviso, after Epicurus' statement that "the sage will marry according to life circumstance" (DL 10.119).[21] This leaves ground for the vagaries of individual cases, like Idomeneus, active in the court of either Antigonus Monophthalmus or Lysimachus, Mithres, finance minister to Lysimachus, and Colotes, who dedicated a book to Ptolemy II Philadelphus, L. Piso Caesoninus, Consul and father-in-law to Julius Caesar, and Cassius the tyrannicide. The slogan and summaries are misleading, and actual school doctrine preserved leeway for individual prescriptions. This proviso should be attached to almost every ethical doctrine, as Roskam

suggests (2007: 35–6), and it allows a great deal of adaptability in prescription and therapy according to individual needs and circumstances.

This adaptability is occasionally visible in the fragments of Epicurus' letters.[22] Beyond the three complete letters, a protreptic to Menoeceus, to Herodotus on physics, and to Pythocles on meteorology, we have quite a few fragments from others. Epicurus is explicit about his purpose in composing them: the first sentence of the letter to Herodotus states that it is intended as a study-aide for those who cannot understand or remember the whole of Epicurus' physical system. Pythocles asked for a memorize-able summary of the meteorological doctrines (*Ep. Pyth.* 116, cf. *Ep. Hdt.* 35, etc.; Epicurean memorization of doctrine is parodied at Persius 3.77–87). In other letters, Epicurus reminds students of points of doctrine, e.g. Anaxarchus ([42] Arr.) who forgot that the virtues are only instrumental, or to reassure students, like Apelles ([43] Arr.), Pythocles ([89] Arr.) and probably Menoeceus, that they were capable of mastering their studies. He could show deep concern for his students, like in his consolation to Dositheus ([46] Arr.) and his tireless efforts to free Mithres from Craterus ([49] and [64] Arr.). In these, language that assimilates teachers and students to divinities is not arrogance or flattery, but keeps the ultimate goal—*ataraxia* and a lifestyle like that of the gods—firmly in sight to encourage the students.

To continue with politics, Epicurus advises Idomeneus to get out of politics at a suitable moment. Seneca (*Ep*. 22.5 = [56] Arr.) mentions the letter:

> read Epicurus' letter which he addressed to Idomeneus, whom he asks to escape [*fugiat*, "flee" or "go into exile"] and hurry as much as possible, before some greater force should intervene and remove his ability to withdraw. The same author adds that he must try nothing unless it can be tried in a fitting and timely fashion.

Idomeneus was somehow tangled up in politics, and could not easily extract himself, so Epicurus' advice is to keep an eye out for a good time to escape, because staying involved could be dangerous. Epicurus' statement, preserved in Seneca (*Ep*. 21.5 = 133 Us. = [55] Arr.), that his letters will make Idomeneus more famous than politics, is directed (as Roskam 2007, 48–49, infers) towards Idomeneus' current vain desire for glory; that too can be healed in due time, but Idomeneus must first escape his dangerous situation and undergo philosophical therapy before his false belief can be cured. We can see here Nussbaum's three axioms at work: Epicurus directs his argument at Idomeneus' current situation and beliefs with an eye towards his ultimate happiness. He does not try to get there all at once, but to convince Idomeneus to take the necessary first steps. That the therapy was effective—and the parallel with medical practice was known—can be inferred from the fact that Mithres called Epicurus "Paean" (the name of a god of healing) in one of his letters (DL 10.4). No surprise then that later Epicureans gathered and published his correspondence as a repository of guidance for later generations.[23]

On Frank Speech

All the therapeutic practices discussed above were institutionalized within the school, as we see from Philodemus' *On Frank Speech* (*Peri Parrhesias*). This work, preserved in *PHerc*. 1471, was based on the lectures of Zeno of Sidon, head of the Epicurean school in the early first century BCE, though Philodemus was willing to claim authorship, and I follow his lead. Only approximately the last third is preserved, and none of the current editions has the fragments in the correct order or even presents all of the text preserved on the papyrus.[24] Despite this, a great deal of information about Epicurean teaching and therapeutic practices

can be gleaned from it. The surviving part of the work is organized by headings which treat problems in the use of frank speech within the Epicurean school; we do not know anything about its organization as a whole. These discussions indicate wide variation among the students, including women (col. 21b), older people (col. 24a), and those born into noble families (col. IVb), as well as grades of students: "the delicate," an intermediate class, and "the strong ones" (fr. 7). Epicurus himself had envisaged both young and old (*Men.* 122) and men and women ([98] Arr.) philosophizing. Philodemus and Zeno evidently expected a wide variety of students, of very different backgrounds and aptitudes, in their lecture-halls, each of whom required individualized therapy. Interestingly, the work assumes a community: students interact with each other and with the therapists in the presence of others, and some of the treatise discusses how to handle emotions like jealousy or shame that can result from public praise or correction. It is also interesting that the treatise as we have it does not outline any sort of philosophical curriculum, though it does occasionally refer to more and less advanced students. It is perhaps more parallel to a Community Rule than a curriculum of study.

Marcello Gigante (1975) outlined the *philosophia medicans* embodied in the *On Frank Speech*; in general, he notes that "medicine—in its terminology and its function—contributes to creating and configuring the ethico-educational vision of frank speech coherently."[25] Frank speech is important truth telling, designed to make students aware of their own mistakes or those of others and to correct them. It can also be encouraging: praise of progress or individual correct actions is important because it encourages the students and sets good examples for the others. Discussion of dispositions, praise, and blame (coll. Ia-IIb) shows that Philodemus assumes the Epicurean account of the soul with its atomic dispositions that can be changed by outside interventions, which are frank speech, praise, and blame.

In summary, students must become aware of their own errors, either by themselves or when a teacher or fellow-student notices them (frr. 40, 41, 49, 50, 53, etc.). Teachers sometimes catch students in the act, but often must diagnose stochastically, like a doctor, on the basis of reasonable signs and inferences (frr. 1, 57, 63, etc.). These errors are removed (cf. Hipp. *De Victu* I.15) by philosophical arguments and frank criticism, which is likened to unpleasant but necessary medical interventions, like worm-wood or surgery (col. XVII), and hellebore (Tab. XII extrem. fr.). Frank criticism can be bitter, verging on abuse (frr. 7, 14, 60), but this is not ideal (frr. 6, 11, 14, 20, 26, etc.); some people require gentle intervention, like Pythocles (fr. 6, cf. fr. 20). Frank speaking cleanses (*katharsis*, fr. 46) or purges (*kenōma*, fr. 63) the bloat caused by mental or emotional disturbances (fr. 67). The Epicurean teacher is himself already purged [*kathareuōn*], well-intentioned, and knows how to cure (fr. 44). The philosophers have already been cured of their own illnesses by mastering Epicurus' philosophy and life-style (fr. 45, 51); they will encourage their students by praising success and discounting failure (fr. 4). Their treatments will vary not just according to the students' needs, but to their own aptitudes and experiences (col. VIb). Hippocrates, in *On Ancient Medicine* 9, blames many illnesses on over-fullness [*plērōsis*] or emptiness [*kenōsis*]; it is striking that one of the concerns of the *On Frank Speech* is to eliminate mental-over-fullness and that a general Epicurean concern is with eliminating empty beliefs [*kenai doxai*]. Doctrines are assimilated to food: what is disagreeable should be spat out (fr. 18; cf. the concern with dietetics throughout the Hippocratic corpus). Frr. 63–6 are especially full of the medical comparison; different philosophical treatments are compared to different medical ones, inference from symptomatic signs is used as a basis for diagnosis, repeated treatments are sometimes necessary, passions are relieved [*koufizō*]. Unfortunately, just as some cases are terminal, so too some students are incurable (frr. 69 and 84).

On Frank Speech, as we have it, is more a teacher's guidebook than a set of case-studies, so we cannot see in detail how Philodemus or any other therapist would have deal with a particular case. A partial exception is the discussion of older people near the end of the treatise.[26] In col. 24, Philodemus writes

> Why are old people rather intolerant (sc. of frank criticism)? Because they believe themselves to be more intelligent because of their age, and think that some folks move from contempt for their physical weakness to frank criticism and absolutely outrageous behavior … [XXIVb] … they are mistaken, and because they are revered and honored among the many, they think that being criticized by anyone [πρός τινων] is incredible, and because they see that old age is deemed worthy of certain [sc. indulgences or honors?], they take care not to be seen unworthy of them and so deprived of them. And the saying "The old are children again" gets under their skin and needles them, since they're afraid that … their characters …

We can identify several worries that older people have about frank criticism: that their experience and intelligence will be undervalued, that they will fall prey to elder-abuse due to their physical infirmity, that they might lose the high-regard in which they are held, and that a common saying appears to license disrespectful or humiliating treatment. Frank criticism might activate these worries: it might appear that the therapist is acting out of station or condescending to them or treating them poorly, and they may react poorly. Additionally, if an outsider witnesses the frank criticism, he might get the idea that he can get away with actual crimes against the older people.

Unfortunately, Philodemus' prescription is lost, but we can imagine several tactics: perhaps older people are to be rebuked only in private, or with particular gentleness, or in an indirect way, like in fr. 9, where the therapist "admits" one of his own mistakes as an illustrative example, even though he did not actually commit any error. In general, the therapist will carefully calibrate his rhetoric so as to avoid saying anything that would activate one of these worries, so that the real message gets across.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I will try to lay out a synoptic summary of what an Epicurean would see and consider in the treatment of some patient. First, the therapist becomes acquainted with the patient, because knowledge of his beliefs, desires, and fears, as well as of his dispositions, is necessary for treatment. He begins with the basics of Epicurean doctrine which are intended to combat the most troubling symptoms of his illness: the fears of death and the gods and wrong opinions about pleasure and pain. The patient learns the basics of Epicurean doctrine: an outline of the physical system and generalized ethical rules. You must stop the bleeding before you can set the bone. As treatment progresses, and the patient's condition improves, the therapist can treat other issues, perhaps the patient's arrogance or irascibility with individually targeted diatribes, topics of study, and other tactics. Little by little, the patient's physical constitution—his soul—will be improved by doses of doctrinal therapy and good living.

In some cases, the patient suffers from an illness requiring special treatment; perhaps Idomeneus was one. His involvement in politics required special handling: first he had to be convinced that his current situation was dangerous, then he had to extract himself from his position. If he suffered from glory-seeking, he had to be shown the troubles consequent on that kind of life and that a quieter life-style would be more pleasant. He had to learn certain

basics of Epicureanism in order for the arguments about his specific condition to have force: he must believe that a pleasant life is better than a glorious one for him to want to leave politics.

Eventually, the patient is purged and their diet improved, they are freed from fears and false beliefs, and go on to live healthier, more pleasant lives.

Notes

1 Cf. *SV* 54 and 64. The rhetoric of the epigraph has its own afterlife in Epicurean thought: Philodemus, in his *On Anger*, compares students who cannot endure Epicurean therapy to sores that cannot endure even the most gentle drugs (col. 19.17–21).
2 Despite their belief that most people required *therapeia*, Epicureans do not say that most people are insane, only that they have damaging false beliefs. I wonder if they were trying to avoid stigmatizing those who might come to them for help. There are interesting direct comparisons between arrogance and the Sacred Disease (epilepsy) at fr. 224 Us. and false desires and fevers at fr. 471 Us.
3 Asmis (2001) covers many of these topics from the perspective of education.
4 Nussbaum actually gives two lists: in her 1986 article, she gives a unified list of nine, divided into "A" and "B" groups (the difference is that Aristotle does not agree with the B positions); in her 1999 book (which I have followed), she gives a list of ten.
5 iv and vii, the focus on the individual and asymmetry of roles, led to two Epicurean practices, unhelpfully called confession and informing. Confession is really just reporting one's own symptoms to the therapist, as anyone concerned with their own health would do, and informing is reporting someone else's symptoms to their therapist, as anyone concerned with a friend's health would do. The Christian connotations of "confession," and the political overtones of "informing," are both out of place.
6 On study of other philosophers, see e.g. Erler (2011), Clay (2004) on Philodemus' *Syntaxis*, and Leone (2019) on Empedocles. On definitions, see Asmis (1984: 35–7) and Giovacchini (2003).
7 For a discussion of the elementary tools available for learning doctrine, see Angeli (1986).
8 See Warren (2009: 236–8) for the Philodemus passage.
9 Hankinson 2013: 94–5, suggests a similar therapeutic use for multiple explanations and arguments.
10 On relabeling, see Sorabji (2000: 222–3) and Tsouna (2009: 259–60).
11 See Tsouna (2003) and (2007: 52–87).
12 Cf. Bad Religion's complaint, in "I Want to Conquer the World" (*No Control*, 1989), "Hey man of science with your perfect rules of measure, / can you improve this place with the data that you gather?"
13 The saying is pithier in Greek and has a finely wrought structure: ἄφοβον ὁ θεός, ἀνύποπτον ὁ θάνατος, καὶ τἀγαθὸν μὲν εὔκτητον, τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκκαρτέρητον.
14 On multiple explanation in general, see Hankinson (2013) and Bakker (2016: 8–75). There is debate about whether Epicurus considered all the explanations adduced in any given case to be merely possible or if he thought they were all true, and if so, in what sense.
15 Theophrastus describes the superstitious man at *Characters* 16. The *Characters* is a set of sketches of various types of people, including the ironic man, the gossip, the grumbler, the coward, and the like. The superstitious man is punctilious in his observance of even very minor religious and superstitious practices, like avoiding using roads that have been crossed by weasels and spitting at the sight of epileptics. On the *Characters* as a whole, see Diggle (2005).
16 The text is still in very bad shape, and consequently the physical mechanism(s) that Epicurus described are poorly understood. See Laursen (1995) and (1997) for the text, and Sedley (1983), Purinton (1999), O'Keefe (2005), Masi (2006), and Németh (2017) for discussions.
17 On the medicinal diatribe, its history, and Philodemus' diatribe against anger, see Armstrong and McOsker (forthcoming) with bibliography. On Philodemus' diatribe against fear of death, see Armstrong (2004). On Lucretius' diatribe against fear of death, see Wallach (1976); on his diatribe against love, see Brown (1987). On fear of death, cf. *Ep. Men.* 124 and *KD* 20.
18 For Chrysippus, see Tieleman (2003); for Bion, see Kindstrand (1976).
19 The placebo and nocebo effects in medicine may be a parallel: expectations of improvement or deterioration (among other causes) seem to be drivers of improvement or deterioration of physical symptoms, that is, the mind is having an effect on the body. See a recent summary of work on the placebo and nocebo effects, see Dodd, Dean, Vian, and Burk 2017.

20 Demetrius Laco may himself have been a doctor, if he is the one Erotian has in mind at *Hippocraticarum Collectio* 32 (p. 5 Nachmanson) and 86.1 (pp. 47–8 Nachmanson); he apparently argues against Herophilian physicians at *PHerc.* 1012, coll. 42–7 Puglia (see McOsker forthcoming). Philodemus promises a (now lost) discussion of epistemology of the Empirical physicians at *On Signs* col. 60 De Lacy and De Lacy.

21 It is translated into Latin by Seneca as *nisi siquid intervenerit*, "unless some circumstance should intervene" (*De Otio* 3.2 = fr. 9 Us).

22 The fragments are gathered as [40]-[133] Arr.; Erbì (forthcoming) is reediting them with commentary. In the meanwhile, see Militello (1997), Erbì (2015), Campos Daroca and López-Martinez (2010), and Tepedino Guerra (2010). Note that Lucian (*De Saltu inter Sal*. 6 = [40] Arr.) appears to make a distinction between the serious letters, presumably the doctrinal ones, and those to his dearest friends, which may have been primarily social or hortatory.

23 In fact, later Epicureans had access to a great deal of correspondence from the early Garden, not just Epicurus'. See *PHerc*. 176 (ed. Vogliano) with Angeli (1988a) and Philodemus' *Pragmateiai* (ed. Militello).

24 Olivieri (1914) is the only available edition; it is almost completely unreliable. Konstan, Clay, Glad, Thom, and Ware (1998) and Ghisu (2015) largely reproduce Olivieri's text with translations. Ben Henry is producing a new edition.

25 "La medicina—nella terminologia e nella funzione—concorre a creare ed a configurare in modo coerente la visione eticopedagogica della libertà di parola …"

26 See Hammerstaedt (2015) for a discussion of old age in Epicureanism, focused on Diogenes of Oenoanda's inscription.

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27

MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE IMPERIAL ROMAN STOA

Georgia Mouroutsou

Prerequisites to Understanding What Characterizes Roman Stoicism: Traits of an Era[1]

After the historical events at 88–86 that led to the siege of Athens by Sylla, philosophy was officially decentralized and athenocentrism gave way to a diaspora of philosophers throughout the Mediterranean region. Despite no longer being rooted in Athens, Stoicism, in the meantime fertile with Platonic and Aristotelian thought due to the Middle Stoa of Posidonius and Panaetius, survived under the reign of the first Roman Emperor Augustus and until the second half of the third century CE. After this time, the biographer Diogenes Laertius no longer names a Stoic philosopher.

The Stoic figures of the Roman Empire undertook various roles: they engaged in politics, philosophical scholarship, teaching, advising, and playwriting. Athenodorus of Tarsus and Arius Didymus flourished as moral advisor and philosophical scholar, respectively, under the aegis of Augustus. Seneca served as Nero's political advisor, playwright of tragedies, and writer of a variety of philosophically-inclined texts. Belonging to the higher class along with Seneca, Musonius Rufus engaged both in politics and teaching in Rome. Among others, he taught Epictetus after the latter was freed from slavery and before he established his own school in Nicopolis in Epirus (Northwestern Greece). Hierocles, a "grave and holy man", in the eyes of his contemporary, Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* ix.5.8), contributed to the old Stoic ethical theory of appropriation [*oikeiōsis*]. Lastly, Marcus Aurelius, emperor from 161 to 180, composed a philosophical diary and contributed to the return of Stoicism to Athens by establishing four chairs, one each for Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism.

Researchers have expressed a tendency to prefer the early Stoics due to their formulation of a rigorous philosophical system.[2] That predisposition has been often corroborated by a deeply-ingrained Hegelian narrative of philosophy, which states that Roman Stoicism is a caricature of the early system and mirrors the decline of the school. Personal understandings of the outlook that philosophical endeavors should adopt have also nurtured prejudice. In the last decades, however, there has been an increasing number of fruitful studies of the late-Stoic figures, which have highlighted their special character and contributions to Stoic philosophy.

Eclecticism is the prevailing trait associated with Roman Stoic philosophy, but it does not have the negative connotations that many still relate with the term:[3]

i Most of our Stoic philosophers are not eclectics as they are not lacking in creativity and merely cherry-picking parts from different systems of thoughts in a disparate manner after browsing in the supermarket of philosophy. This is because later Stoics never gave up their Stoic ship and were able to formulate distinctive problems in their own ways and offer creative solutions.

ii Nor are they eclectics as in unorthodox for three reasons: First, orthodoxy wasn't a decisive criterion during the early Stoa. Though Chrysippus was the authoritative figure, serious disagreement still occurred on various topics from proponents with opposing views (for example, the minimalism of Aristo of Chios and his reduction of the system to ethics). Dissenters, though, were not "excommunicated" as heterodox and un-Stoics; instead, their theses were integrated into vibrant debates. Therefore, returning to and preserving the purity of the old doctrine that characterizes any ideal of orthodoxy has no ground. Second, orthodoxy and unorthodoxy has absolutely no place in Stoicism in the first centuries CE. Despite commonalities detected between some, or all, of the main Stoic representatives (Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius), we see that it is not appropriate to essentialize Roman Stoicism when we look at what has been retained from the minor figures. It has been too multifariously shaped by individual philosophers on the basis of content and the literary genres they focused on as well as the verbal tone they chose to discuss their topics. Third, though the late Stoics do not think they are breaking from the Stoic doctrines (they are their own people, *nostri*, as Seneca calls the Stoics) and nor do they aim at introducing innovative ideas [*kainodoxein*], they also do not blindly follow any of the earlier or later Stoic authorities.[4]

The open-minded and creative character of Roman Stoicism is unsurprising as it complies with the general tendency to adopt various philosophical styles that other schools of that era exemplified, such as Platonists. Though from "the same hearth" (Atticus: fr. 4, 801c) with no deviation from school-Platonism, the Middle Platonists, for instance, disagree with one another about allies and enemies (Stoics or Aristotelians) and adapt different terminology and style (Stoic or Aristotelian). Though Atticus is not in line with most fellow Platonists, and Plutarch is a maverick by representing quite idiosyncratic Plato-interpretations, they are both still Platonists in their own unique manner. This open-mindedness also exceeds the borders of the school. Alcinous used Stoic-style language to express distinctive Platonic ideas and Marcus Aurelius applied Platonic-style language to convey distinctively Stoic ideas. Seneca's metaphysics is infused with Platonic elements, and both his and Marcus Aurelius' ethics draw from Epicurean views. To allow Epicurean elements in ethics was previously unthought of, given the rivalry between Stoicism and Epicureanism.

The analogy between later Stoics and Middle Platonists eventually reaches its limits because the Platonists of the era did engage in heated debates about orthodoxy and condemned the prevailing orthodoxy from the perspective of a truer orthodoxy (consider Numenius against Moderatus and Nicomachus, and Plutarch against his predecessors), but this was not the case in Roman Stoicism. Whereas Middle Platonists interpreted Plato's texts and oral Academic doctrines, which gave rise to a renaissance of Platonic commentaries since the first century BCE, the Stoics did not focus on commenting on Stoic works. In contrast to Plato, who composed works that do not articulate a system, but instead invited following Platonists to create one, the early Stoics very quickly created a fully-fleshed

out philosophical system by spelling out the precise implications of and adding further detail and clarity to the formulations of Zeno, the founder and first head of the Stoic School in Athens (LS 63B; Arius Didymus *apud* Stob. *Ecl*. ii 76. 1–6). After all, the later Stoics did not need to comment on earlier Stoic works as the *koine* language offered no linguistic impediment to understanding, whereas Platonists offered exegesis of Platonic texts due to the partial alienation often derived from the language of the Platonic dialogues. In fact, the first preserved commentary on a Stoic work, Epictetus' *Handbook*, was not written until Simplicius did so in the sixth century CE.

The strength of the later Stoics' is their plastic power: their capacity to develop out of themselves in their own way, to develop "the School" in new directions, and transform and incorporate what was once foreign and belonging to the opponents' repertoire into Stoicism. This is how Stoicism survived for so long: as a living, developing, and self-transforming organism that adapts to the new cultural contexts over time.

Moral Philosophy in Roman Stoicism: One Focal Concern

From the above framework that cautions against essentializing Roman Stoicism, and based on a similarity to and some divergences from early Stoic focal concerns, we can formulate the following narrative about moral philosophy in Roman Stoicism: like other ancient philosophical schools, the Stoics took philosophy to be a way of life from early on,[5] and from that understanding, they applied the analogy to the craft of medicine, drawing from and refining the view as represented by Plato's Socrates in the *Gorgias* (see Sellars 2009: ch. 2, for the details of the story). As medicine aims at curing bodily disease, philosophy, and in particular its ethical part, intends to cure the soul's disease, which is to succumb to all kinds of passions. "Therapy of the soul"[6] is not a new concept introduced by the Stoics. Stoic ethics, though, is an ethics whose central concern was the cure of passions to a degree that is unparalleled by other ancient proposals.[7] After all, Marcus Aurelius' characterization of ethics as giving an account of the passions (*pathologein*, viii.13)[8] is not idiosyncratic.

That common denominator aside, ethics becomes the focal concern in all later Stoicism. Ethics was one part of the early Stoic system, inseparable from logic and physics, but it never attained primacy among the attested three parts of early Stoicism.[9] The later Stoics subordinate the other philosophical fields and use them more or less strictly in order to make ethical points. Different later Stoic philosophers have chosen distinctive ways of relating ethics and logic or physics. Some have not blushed at expressing strong criticism and contempt for logic. A second divergence from the earlier character of Stoic ethics is that what matters is not theoretical ethics in itself and as inextricably connected to and supported by the other two parts, but the actual application of ethics[10]. Consequently, the topic of training [*askēsis*] gains special interest, and thus, the later Stoics add the vital element of behaviorism to the cognitive therapy of passions. In this respect, late-Stoic thought turns into the precursor of cognitive behavioral therapy. Third, the later Stoics are not only interested in the application of ethics and therapy of passions, but they also highlight the self. Instead of adding a book of therapeutics for general application to a theoretical part on *Passions*, as Chrysippus had done, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius eagerly focus on the moral progress of themselves, and invite one to "withdraw to their selves," a motto that will be widely accepted by Christians, Stoics, and Neo-Platonists. Interestingly, this is shown through both the content and the form of their works. The result is expanded genres of practical ethics with all the later Stoic twists and turns. Social ethics flourishes as well, one of many fruits of the era.

Since we do not have a homogenous group, I will treat the following figures separately: Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, Hierocles and Marcus Aurelius. I will, though, concentrate on the three main figures: Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca on Curing the Self in the Present Time

> Disce gaudere … Mihi crede, verum gaudium res severa est.
> Learn to rejoice … I believe that true joy is a stern matter.
> (*Ep.* 23.2 and 4)

Seneca preferred to philosophize and think through problems in Latin without being as seriously concerned as Cicero with the translation of Greek technical terms. In his last years, he addressed 124 Letters to Lucilius, which are predominantly concerned with ethics.[11] He postponed a more comprehensive treatment of ethics for later, as he concedes, giving us a hint that we should not overstress the letters' philosophical character.[12] Though the addressed person is a real friend of his, active in government, we should keep in mind that Seneca is both poet and philosopher, and thus, interested in depicting types of events [*katholou*] rather than being faithful to historical and biographical details [*kathekasta*]. He reveals the work's aim to Lucilius in *Ep.* 8.2–3:

> I am committing to the page some healthful admonitions, like the recipes for useful salves. I have found these effective on my own sores, which, even if not completely healed, have ceased to spread. The right path, which I myself discovered late in life when weary from wandering, I now point out to others.

On the fictional level, Seneca corresponds with a friend: he addresses the particular person that makes progress, Lucilius, and, on the philosophical level, he aims at stimulating and accompanying his moral development and transformation "from the current to the normative self"[13] as a Stoic spiritual guide.[14] Seneca's pedagogical role is multifaceted. When reading letters like 13, the first cognitive behavioral therapist emerges, inviting the patient to put his thoughts about reality to the test of objectivity. When talking about indifferents he adds: "not in a Stoic sense but in a less exalted way" (13.4).[15] The letters are not tailored towards educating students of the Stoic hearth, but address a broader audience of contemporaries and descendants. Even some Epicurean dicta that do not oppose the Stoic principles are made use of to the extent that they can be integrated into Lucilius' moral education.[16] Seneca does not underrate them as mere means to an end or lower steps on the Stoic ladder, but instead appropriates them as "best ideas that are common property" (12.11), an unthought of attitude in the early Stoa.

Though predicating Stoic theory on the cure of the soul, Seneca does not base his advice on developing and explaining general theory. It is instead based on how he himself has progressed and which part of it his friend is currently able to listen to. Occasionally, like in the above lines, he admits that he is still in the therapeutic process: his pains have not been completely cured. We can use *Ep*. 75, which describes three categories of people who progress toward wisdom, and speculate that Seneca hereby implies that he still relapses into passions, though, he has controlled his mind's infirmities to some extent. So, clearly, he does not join the upper class of those who develop morally, but whether he belongs to the second or third worst category remains unclear.[17]

Interestingly, Seneca kills two birds with one stone since therapy is offered on both ends of Lucilius and himself. Through writing about and reflecting on passions and their

eradication through the appropriate evaluation of indifferents, Seneca wishes to help both his friend and himself:

> No, I am lying in the same ward, as it were, conversing with you about our common ailment and sharing remedies. So listen to me as if I were talking to myself: I am letting you into my private room and giving myself instructions while you are standing by.
>
> (27.1; compare 23.1)

Those all too rare creatures, the Stoic sages, are not enemies of the passionate fools and wrongdoers, but the ones who, as genuine pedagogues, attempt to straighten up their fellows (*De Ira*, ii 10). Not a sage himself—far from it—nor even a professional Stoic teacher, Seneca presents the prescriptive ideal in a way that ensures his friend does not lose hope. Seneca nurtures courage and cheerfulness by focusing on the factual progress he and his friend (might) gradually achieve and not on the fact that they are not yet and most probably will never become sages.

As no other Stoic does, Seneca spills quite an amount of ink on describing the good feeling [*eupatheia*][18] of joy that soothes the sage's peaceful mind and differentiates it from the passion of pleasure that troubles a fool's turbulent mind (*Ep*. 23, 27 and 59). The sage is not a "man of stone" but joyful. Joy, though, is not charming bait for Lucilius, but a stern matter in which he needs to be educated because the gladness that accompanies the wise person makes all affective shades of cheer that a progressing fool might experience fade far away. The former's object is the only true good (wisdom), whereas the latter hunts for any preferred indifferents (all Fortune's gives and takes, including moral progress[19]). By fleeing from all burdensome occupations, Lucilius needs to reflect on what he truly possesses, namely, his real self, which is his mind and its power to defeat Fortune, rise above it, and achieve lasting tranquility.

The quest of virtue is exceptionally demanding, a heroic endeavor that is cognitive through and through and completely up to us; Lucilius must liberate himself from all passions, not just pleasure,[20] given that they are all connected with one another (*Ep*. 5). He does this by taking the indifferents that Fortune serves his way, in accordance with divine providence, to be what they really are: neither good nor bad. As Seneca stresses, in his mild tone the things that glitter from the outside, imported from elsewhere, and their respective pleasures are superficial, short-lived, and can rapidly turn into their opposite, namely, pain. This is in contrast to the permanent, unshakeable, and pure joy of the sage. His elaboration seems to be in accordance with earlier doctrines about the cognitive nature of passions, the role of indifferents and the sage's good affective states. There is an interesting twist, though. Seneca—and Marcus Aurelius follows suit—repeatedly underlines the opposition between temporary indifferents and permanent joy. In Stoicism, though, it isn't clear whether indifferents are any more transient than goods given that virtue is a material state of finite, mortal objects. Instances of virtue, then, are not any less transient than, say, wealth, a finite, passing condition. Indifferents may be more precarious within a single life than virtue once attained, but that can be understood as a sheer matter of degree. Seneca does not deviate from the core early Stoic view about the nature of the indifferents as what is given and taken by Fortune and can be used well or badly (basically a Socratic view; see DL vii.103).[21] He also explicitly agrees with earlier Stoic emphasis that a mere moment of virtue suffices for goodness and happiness (*Ep*. 92.25).[22] Nonetheless, transience and duration play a role they never did in the earlier extant fragments.

Besides his mind, Lucilius owns the present of all parts of time, not his past or his future, because the past is done with and the future remains uncertain. The primacy of the present moment is not theoretical or embedded in physics, as in early Stoicism, but is of ethical significance. Seneca, and later Marcus Aurelius, translates the primacy of the present into the urgency and importance of living in and shaping the present moment instead of being burdened by the unchangeable past or postponing life and hoping for the uncertain future.

Musonius Rufus

> Ouk ar' homoiōs hekateron paideusomen oude tēn technēn, aph' hēs genoit' an anthrōpos agathos, ep' ison amphoterous didaxomen.
>
> Will we not educate both [men and women] alike, and teach both in the same way the art by which a human would become good?
>
> (4.4)

Musonius Rufus was called the Roman Socrates and was a famous teacher in Rome with frequent interruptions of his teaching activity due to exile. Stobaeus preserves 21 excerpts from his teachings, which were recorded by two of his students. The extant texts are concerned with ethics, whose practical character mirrors the Roman imperial era. Similarly, but not surprisingly, philosophy is understood as an art of becoming a better human by acquiring and establishing virtue in which the philosophers-to-be are in need of training (see *Discourse* viii and vi, respectively). His thoughts about women are progressive but not revolutionary: women should receive philosophical education so that their function as daughters and wives is corroborated. He seems to be more open-minded about marriage since he thinks the relationship between the two spouses, not childbearing, is of the highest importance.[23]

Epictetus on Socratic Ascetics

> Mē zētei ta ginomena ginesthai hōs theleis, alla thele ta ginomena hōs ginetai kai euroēseis.
>
> Do not seek the occurrences to occur as you want, but want the occurrences as they occur and your life will flow well.
>
> (*Ench.* viii.1.1–2)

With Epictetus, more than with any other Stoic philosopher of the Imperial era, we gain valuable glimpses into Stoic practice, whose curriculum included studying Chrysippus. Epictetus' *Discourses*, notes taken by his pupil Arrian, consolidate points that were introduced during his lectures and were addressed later at his school in Nicopolis, the city he fled to after Emperor Diomitian exiled him and other philosophers from Rome in 95 CE.

If early Stoicism is a version of Socratic and Cynic ethics, a version that took the form of a system (see Schofield 2003), Epictetus revived Socrates anew by creatively appropriating both his form and content, as well as methodology and beliefs (see Long 2002). With modesty equally admirable to Seneca's, Epictetus pointed to Socrates as a paradigm and did not exalt himself as the teaching authority.[24] He drew from the protreptic and elenctic Socratic dialectic as the appropriate method that can bring positive results and contribute to moral progress. He also adopted many Socratic dogmas that are defended in Plato's *Gorgias* and elsewhere (like the desire for the good as the motivation for all actions and the unwillingness of errors).

With the Socratic art of living as the model for moral progress, Epictetus underscores the training that is necessary [*askēsis*], as is required for any craft.[25] In *Discourses* iii. 2, he introduces three fields of study [τόποι] in which people who make moral progress should be trained for the sake of improving in practice (compare his i.4. 11–12, iii.3 and iii.7; and ii.19 on practice as the goal). The first is the field of desires and aversions, so that one attains what one desires and is not hit by what one wishes to avoid. The second field is related to our impulses to act and not to act. The third area relates to our assents. The tripartition of study creatively reinterprets and corresponds to the division of the Stoic parts of philosophy (DL vii.39): i) physical exercises aimed at harmonizing our desires with the cosmic desires; ii) ethical exercises concerning the various appropriate acts in our social context (iv.12.16: *kai pros tas dunameis tōn scheseōn*); and iii) logical exercises aimed at freeing our judging function from error and hastiness.[26]

Seneca highlighted what we possess and what is not our own, and speaks of what is in our power (*quid sit iuris nostri, Ep*. 16). Epictetus, though, introduces the distinction between what is up to us or under our control and what is not [*eph' hēmin vs. ouk eph' hēmin*] as a fundamental yardstick for moral progress: "Some things are up to us and some things are not up to us."[27] At other times, he differentiates between what we *can* decide on and what we cannot (*prohaireton* vs. *aprohaireton*). At the very beginning of the *Manual*, which his student Arrian compiled and Simplicius preserved, we are told that anything related to our cognitive faculty, our judgments and what is dependent on them, is up to us. For example, our impulses, desires and aversions, whereas what the early Stoics called "indifferents," both preferred and dispreferred, are not up to us: any kind of possession, fame, public office, health, and their opposites are allocated to us as god wills and as long as god wills, and are not chosen. What we are able to decide is whether to use them well or badly.

The cognitive faculty and its activities are unimpeded. *No matter what* might be happening to us, no one and nothing but us can shape our judgment and evaluation of it, and for this we take full responsibility. On the other hand, the attainment of allegedly good members of indifferents can be thwarted and the avoidance of its allegedly bad members might be unsuccessful. Though the twofold distinction is not principally a distinction in accordance with value and goodness, but instead relates to moral responsibility, intrinsically good and bad things fall under what is up to us, while indifferents—Seneca's gifts of Fortune—are not up to us.

Beginners should not desire anything at all, neither virtue since it is not yet at hand, nor any preferred indifferents that might make them quite easily succumb to passions, which is something intrinsically bad when fervently desiring the indifferents or after failing to attain them (*Ench*. 1 and 2, *Diss*. i.1). As for aversion, beginners should redirect it from the dispreferred indifferents (so as not to succumb to fear when expecting them or sadness when encountering them) to what is against nature among the things that are up to us.

In both works, indifferents are accordingly characterized as nothing in relation to us [*ouden pros hēmas*][28] They are called indifferents in relation to what we really are and do not matter in relation to our cognitive faculty. The point that Epictetus allows to surface—and Marcus Aurelius follows him in this—is that indifferents, in themselves, can neither contribute to nor impede what we are.[29]

Hierocles: Adding to the Old Topic of Appropriation [*Oikeiōsis*]

> kata ton entetamenon esti peri tēn deousan hekastōn chresin to episunagein pōs tous kuklous hōs epi to kentron kai tēi spoudēi metapherein aei tous ek tōn periechontōn eis tous periechomenous.

> it is the task of a well-tempered man in his proper treatment of each group to draw the circles together somehow towards the centre, and to keep zealously transferring those from the enclosing circles into the enclosed ones.
>
> (Stob. *Ecl.* iv.671–3)

We don't know much about the Stoic Hierocles other than that he lived in the second century CE. We do have, though, a long papyrus fragment of his *Elements of Ethics* [*ēthikē stoicheiōsis*] that informs us about the theory of appropriation/familiarization/affiliation,[30] which adds to accounts of Stoicism in Cicero's *De Finibus* (iii.62–68), in Diogenes Laertius (vii.85–86), and Seneca's *Epistles* 121, as well as some fragments collected by the Byzantine anthologist Stobaeus on appropriate acts and relationships to others and god (iv.671,7–673,11).

Appropriation means that all animals have an inborn awareness of and affection for their evolving natural physical constitution, that is their self. On the basis of that awareness and affection, they aim at self-preservation. The early Stoics developed the theory of appropriation as the foundation of their ethics. Contrary to the Epicureans, who understood pleasure to be the object of our first impulse, the early Stoics considered pleasure to be only a by-product of maintaining and preserving the natural constitution. Hierocles, like Seneca before him, offered empirical proofs for the existence of appropriation, starting from an animal's birth. He based animals' self-awareness on their perception of their parts and their function as well as on their understanding of the function of their self-defence. The affectionate appropriation animals have toward their kindred ones indicates that they are directed towards others from the beginning. Such affectionate appropriation must be further cultivated among rational beings. In the Stobaeus fragment, Hierocles describes us as encompassed by many circles. The first and smallest circle has our mind at its center and encloses the body and anything used for the sake of the body. The next, larger circle encloses parents, siblings, spouses and children; the third more remote family members like aunts, uncles and grandparents. Then a further circle follows that encloses the even more remote relatives to be followed by a larger one that includes local residents. The second closest one and the relationships emanating further out from there—close or distant—are continually included until the outermost of the entire human race is reached that is encompassed in the last and largest circle. Although affection is unequal, we should try to reduce distance and increase affection for our fellow humans as fellow rational beings.

Marcus Antoninus Aurelius on Further Exercises to Cure Passions

> Arkei he parousa hupolēpsis katalēptikē kai he parousa praxis koinōnikē kai he parousa diathesis euarestikē pros pan to para tēn ektos aitian sumbainon.
>
> It is sufficient that your present judgment should grasp its object and that your present action should be directed to the common good and that your present disposition should be well satisfied with all that happens from a cause outside itself.
>
> (*Med.* ix. 6: his appropriation of the threefold Stoic division into logic, ethics, and physics, and the Epictetan three areas of exercises, with the focus on the present time)

Some have underestimated Marcus Aurelius as someone not worthy of the title "philosopher" and some have doubted that he was even a Stoic thinker.[31] Of late, greater appreciation has been shown for what he truly is: a Stoic philosopher in his own distinctive way, though not a Stoic teacher, and not even a sufficiently educated Stoic as he admits himself

(i.17 and vii.67). He never breaks from Stoicism, though. He appears at his best when wearing a Middle Platonist hat, but, alas, he ultimately fails in being one. He is a materialist to the bone, who studied and quoted Epictetus' work, mentions Seneca in his exchange with his tutor, Fronto, and discusses the Stoics in the third person (v.10.1) with Chrysippus among them (vi.42).

His *Meditations*[32] is not comparable to any early Stoic treatises or later Stoic works. It is a work without parallel in the history of philosophy as a work of meditations, which the author never intended to publish. With the exception of the first book, it is certainly not an autobiographical diary. Despite lacking a historiographical focus on particular events, it is, nonetheless, deeply personal for Marcus Aurelius. He conducts an inner dialogue between his occurrent and normative selves,[33] the latter of which he constantly craves but presently falls short of. Since he writes exclusively to himself, he is the only witness to his inner dialogue and shares it with no one but himself. To apply Seneca's metaphor, there is no other patient in the ward but him.

Marcus Aurelius aims for moral improvement[34] that centers on freeing his mind from passions understood in a cognitivist way (vii.48). This keeps his guardian spirit (as he refers to his mind in ii.13, adding a religious overtone) pure from passions, which is the appropriate service [*therapeia*] to the inner deity. The cure as liberation from passions presupposes the correction of falsehood in which they consist. In particular, Marcus Aurelius frequently tries to correct his false views about what is genuinely good, truly bad, and indifferent.[35] The products of his inner dialogue are reminders and general precepts, helpful to have on hand [*procheira*],[36] which he repeats in variations and as repetitive exercises that are meant to contribute to establishing virtue with stability and confidence.

Accordingly, ethics as an account of passions and their therapy (*pathologein*, viii.13.1) predominates as the emperor's main concern and appears to put physics and logic in the background. There is, though, no implication that physics is degraded in any way. And since Marcus Aurelius often grounds ethical truths, such as the neutrality of indifferents, in physics (ii.11 and ix.1; an argument not preserved in the early fragments), it is no surprise that he assigns a particular importance to physics in x.9 and x.31. His goal is practical: he wishes to improve himself and does not provide any underpinning ethical theory, and only and sporadically mentions—not exclusively Stoic[37]—elements of that theory or presupposes but does not explicate those elements. As self-therapeutic, *Meditations* is not a general theoretical work on therapy of emotions, and nor does it assimilate contemporary cognitive behavioral therapy manuals.

Whatever Marcus Aurelius draws from other philosophers, be they Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Chrysippus, Aristo, Seneca, Epictetus, or Epicurus, he does not blindly follow, but instead adds a distinctive twist to their work and translates the result into an ethical concern. Gill concluded that what sounds like Platonizing dualism of body and soul does not threaten his Stoic materialism and has an ethical character (Gill 2007). Alternately, mind's separation from the body highlights that the power of the mind is extraordinary. I argue that Marcus Aurelius expands on the famous Epictetan distinction when it comes to the primacy of the present moment in ethics, translating Chrysippean physics into ethics. There is much yet to welcome with regard to Marcus Aurelius' contributions to the problem of reconciling human autonomy and strict causal determinism, which Inwood has marvelously shown (Inwood, forthcoming).

Far from offering an exhaustive overview, I've kept the discussion within reasonable limits. Above all, I intended to show some common focal concerns and tendencies, and some of the distinctive developments and twists the later Stoics offered in ethics. Instead of combining various elements from here and there, according to the accusation of eclecticism, they developed philosophical problems in their own way.

Notes

1 Consult more comprehensive introductions to Roman Stoicism by Gill (2007) and Reydams-Schils (2016). Inwood and Donini's (2005) treatment elaborates on Stoic ethics in all periods of Stoicism.
2 See Cicero, *De Fin*. III: 74 on "the firmly welded structure" of the Stoic system: "Can you imagine any other system where the removal of a single letter, like an interlocking piece, would cause the whole edifice to come tumbling down?"
3 Despite enlightening and informative essays (see the volume edited by Donini) on eclecticism, people might—consciously or unconsciously—continue nurturing old prejudice.
4 In *Ep*. 33.4, Contrary to the Epicureans, Seneca refers to the prevailing freedom of the Stoic school: "We are not under a monarch. Each of us asserts his own freedom." Compare *Ep*. 113.23. Epictetus integrates Chrysippus' interpretation but highlights the importance of applying his doctrines to a practically-oriented ethics of moral improvement: consult *Diss*. i.4 in particular.
5 *He technē peri holon ton bion*: Stob. 5b10; see Sellars 2009.
6 Therapy of passions as therapy of the soul is well-embedded in the Stoic tradition. Chrysippus distinguishes between the enduring diseased condition of the soul (*nosos, nosēma*) and correlates its affections (pathē) to fits of shivering and fever: *SVF* iii.421, 422, 423, 424, 425 (*PHP* v 2.14 ~ *SVF* iii.465 on instability versus random motions of affections). At the beginning of his *Therapeutics*, he speaks of the two kinds of medicine and cure, the ones of the body and those of the soul (*PHP* v.2.22–4 ~ SW iii. 471).
7 This can be easily explained when one considers that the Stoics diagnosed being conquered by any and all passions as *the* disease of the soul. In comparison to them, Socrates pinpointed ignorance as the soul's disease and Epicurus identified fear as the passion that needs to be eradicated.
8 *Med*. viii.13 suggests that one should give a physical, ethical, and dialectical account of all possible impressions.
9 The order is attested to have either been logic, physics, ethics; or logic, ethics, physics (Chrysippus); or physics, logic, ethics (Posidonius). Consult LS 26B, C and D.
10 Any piece of knowledge belonging to any field should be applied to ethics and action in particular. Seneca writes to Lucilius that he should be "relating *everything* to conduct and the abatement of frenzied passions" (89.23).
11 "*Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*" is mentioned as the title in Aulus Gellius xii.2 and is also given in the oldest Byzantine manuscript copies. We cannot be certain that Seneca gave that title, but he makes clear that the predominant topic is ethics (121.1). Seneca integrates discussions that go beyond ethics in the *Epistles* (58 and 65 on categories and causation, respectively) and conveys ethical messages even when working on other topics, like physics (e.g., in his *Natural Questions*).
12 See, *Ep.* 106, 108, and 109.
13 The expression stems from Long 2009. Seneca makes clear to Lucilius that he does not intend to achieve mere reformation [*emendari*], but transformation (*transfigurari, Ep*. 6.1).
14 Consider Hadot 1969 and Cooper 2009b for that characterization.
15 The studies on late Stoic philosophy and psychotherapy (especially Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) have been increasing as of late. See Robertson 2010.
16 Seneca devotes more space to some topics that he focuses on in his *Epistles*. See, for instance, *Ep*. 92 and 49, and his essays *De beate Vitae* and *De brevitate Vitae.*
17 Also see 98.15, which mentions the possibility of reducing the ulcer or arresting its development.
18 On *eupatheiai* see DL vii.116. Seneca preserves the word *voluptas* for pleasure and the word *gaudium* for the good feeling of joy. Not a lover of technical vocabulary, he might use the latter as joy about indifferents, though, and speaks of the pure or real joy to make clear he has the good state in mind.
19 See, DL vii.107.
20 On anger, see his essay *De Ira*, a reply to his brother's concern about how to soothe it. The text is important for two reasons. First, it is a source of information about pre-emotions or "first movements" as Seneca calls them, which are the initial involuntary bodily reactions (Epictetus fr. 9 *apud* Gellius, xix.1, 14–21). Second, although Seneca does not focus on the correction of the two false judgments involved in the passion, and even becomes un-Stoic at times (if one is caught in passionate rage, one should try to turn one's attention to another passion with less disastrous consequences!), we need to appreciate the serious proposals that

he makes, though, in critical spirit (see, Kaster 2012 in his introduction). Consider Sorabji (2002) Chapters 4 and 3, respectively, for reconstructing the critical dialogue that Seneca conducts with Posidonius (first movement), and the solution he proposes to the problem that judging falsely and disobeying reason are not the same (in dialogue with Zeno and Chrysippus in his second and third movement). Though Seneca does not explicitly enter into the debate between Chrysippus and Cleanthes (cure of passions as a correction of the value- or duty-judgment, respectively), he crucially contributes to moral development and eradication of passions by suggesting mindfulness and self-reflection, and decreasing our egocentricity that is inevitably involved in passions (ii.26 ff.).

21 This can be doubted for Marcus Aurelius. If the present moment is something we can use well or badly but not an indifferent, in contrast to past and future (which are indifferents), there is a shift to be further inquired into.

22 Compare Cicero on duration playing no role in attaining goodness and happiness, *De Fin*. iii, 45–47.

23 For more on women and Stoicism, see Lisa Hill's chapter in this volume, "Feminism and Stoic Sagehood."

24 For Socrates as a paradigm to look up to and imitate, see *Ench*. 51, 53, *Diss*. i. 26, ii. 1, ii. 26, iv.1.

25 Consider Simplicius who, in his introduction to the *Handbook* (*Praef*. 51–52), characterizes the craft whose content is the Epictetan work as he *diorthōtikē (technē) tēs anthrōpinēs zōēs* (the art that corrects human life).

26 Hadot has introduced the term "spiritual exercises" under the influence of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and has been criticized for being overly systematic with Epictetus and—even more inappropriately systematic with—Marcus Aurelius. That said, his theses are still a good point of departure from and pose a challenge to further precision, as far as the interaction between ethics and physics in and beyond the physical exercises is concerned.

27 For the distinction as a distinction of beings, see *Ench*. 1 and *Diss*. i. 22.10. He also operates with the traditional distinction of good, bad, and indifferent things (see, *Diss.* ii. 9.15 and ii. 19.13). On how the theory draws upon the earlier Stoic distinction between external and internal causes (Chrysippus' cylinder analogy) see Bobzien 1998: 330–8.

28 See, *Ench*. 1.5, 32.2; *Diss*. i.18, 12, i.9, 13, i.25,1, i.30, 3, ii.1.6, iii.3, 16, iii.22,21, iv.1,6, iv.5, 32, iv.1, 83.

29 Consider Stob. ii.79, 18–80, 13; 82, 20–1 on the early Stoic understanding of indifferents in relation to our happiness: they are not constitutive of happiness (DL vii.104–5). Epictetus characterizes and evaluates the members of the second category as not mattering or nothing in relation *to our self*: *Diss*. i.4.27, i.9.13, i.20.8, i.25.1, i.29.7, i.30.4, iii.16.16, iii.22.21, iv.1.138, iv.5.32–33, i.7.18; *Ench*. 1.5.6.

30 Consider the different proposals for the translations of the term and their inadequacy in Inwood 2005: 677, fn. 8.

31 See Cooper (2009a) on ethical theory in the *Meditations*, and Rist (1982) who draws a general deprecating picture.

32 On the work's form, see Hadot 1998; Rutherford 1989; Gourinat 2012; and van Ackeren 2011.

33 This description stems from Long 2009. For his inner dialogue, consider the extraordinarily beautiful beginning of x.1 and van Ackeren 2011: vol. I, 206–87.

34 He owes thanks to Rusticus, a Stoic-influenced political adviser, for becoming aware of the need to correct and cure his character: *Diorthōsis kai therapeia tou ēthous* (correction and therapy of character).

35 Marcus Aurelius repeats the Epictetan "everything is judgment" and reminds himself that correcting his judgments liberates him from passions (iv.7, iv.39, vii.14, vii.26, viii.28, viii.47, xi.11, xi.16, xii.8, xii.22). That he also attempts to detach himself by drawing his attention away from the object of passion and making new associations in order to block automatic thoughts does not negate the therapy's cognitive character.

36 See, xii.9 and xii.24; also consider iii.13, iv.3, v.1, vi.48, vii.1, vii.64, ix.42, xi.4, xi.18.

37 Like Seneca and unlike Epictetus, he welcomes Epicurus in ethics to a certain extent; for the fourth part of Epicurus's fourfold therapy, see vii.64.1.

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28

THE ACADEMICS AND THE STOICS ON "TRYING YOUR BEST" AND THE ULTIMATE END OF ACTION

Christiana Olfert

Introduction

"Try your best." Most of us have heard, and have given, this advice. Sometimes it applies to a particular task—say, writing an exam or running a marathon. Sometimes it applies to life as a whole: "all you can do is try your best." The advice to "try your best" is similar to the Stoics' prescription that we should "aim well," both in particular actions and in life as a whole. The Stoics took this advice very seriously. In fact, on their view, "aiming well" is the ultimate end of action and of life. It is the highest goal and greatest good that we can achieve.

The advice to "try your best" can be both motivating and reassuring. It tells you not to worry about your action's success or failure, which may or may not be up to you anyway, and to focus on what you can control. But is this *good* advice? Is it even *coherent* advice? The Academic Sceptics argue that it is not. As advice about life as a whole, they say, "try your best" or "aim well" is at best incomplete, and at worst, incoherent. It can't be advice about our highest goal, because "trying your best" and "aiming well," themselves, aim *at some further end*—namely, the thing you are aiming at and trying to do. Moreover, "trying" and "aiming" are psychological activities. And while getting your psyche in order is clearly very important, is that all there is to our highest good? What about physical health? Friends? Institutional justice, world peace? Do these things play no part in making a good life good? The advice to "try your best" might seem oddly myopic and self-involved in light of the whole range of good things we could be pursuing as part of our highest end.

Current scholarship on Stoic-Academic debates often focuses on epistemology, where the two sides exchange arguments and adjust their ideas about the criterion of truth, the nature of belief, and so on. It is not common to present Stoic and Academic ideas about the end as part of a similar exchange. In this chapter, I break with convention and trace the conversation between Stoic and Academic philosophers about the nature of our ultimate end. The Stoic view that the ultimate end is "aiming well"—that, in a sense, all we need to do is "try our best"—was developed and refined in this conversation. The

Academics, in turn, countered the Stoic view with a series of objections. This is not to say that the Academic side of the debate is merely negative and derivative of the Stoics' views. Rather, as I hope to show, both sides were engaged in the same broad philosophical project: to try to understand what the highest good is, and what it means for us to live well. In this project, both sides of this conversation are responding to intuitions that we might find reasonable. And as such, both sides have perspectives on the ultimate end that are worth taking seriously.

Stoic Starting Points

What, according to the Stoics, is the ultimate end of action? Let us begin with its formal features—*what it is* for something to be an ultimate end. Most obviously, the Stoics say, the ultimate end is "that for the sake of which everything is done, but which is not itself done for the sake of anything."[1] It is also "what all actions are appropriately referred to, while it itself is not referred to anything else" and "the ultimate aim of desire, to which everything else is referred."[2] Finally, it is the standard for success in life. By reference to this end, we can determine whether we are living well or badly.[3] In sum, then, the ultimate end is both the highest good and the ultimate object of desire, and therefore the ultimate guide for deciding what to do and for evaluating what we are doing. In these respects, the Stoics agree with the Aristotelian tradition and with their Epicurean counterparts about what it is to be an ultimate end of action.[4]

But apart from this agreement, the Stoics also make a distinctive point about what it is to be an ultimate end. They say that the ultimate end is something that makes us "safe, impregnable, fenced and fortified … not just largely unafraid, but completely."[5] Their thought seems to be that the ultimate end is something of the greatest value, and something of the greatest value cannot be fragile or easily lost. If it could be, then intuitively there would be something even better than the highest good, namely, *keeping* the highest good. So, in order for our highest good to be the best thing, it must be stable, constant, and the sort of thing that nothing could take away from us. By implication, its achievement must depend entirely on us. And because its achievement depends entirely on us, the highest good and the ultimate end is the perfect standard for evaluating our lives: it measures only our own activity, and is not influenced by luck or external interference. So, for the Stoics, what it is to be an ultimate end of action is, in part, for an end to be entirely up to us and in our control.

Apart from these formal features, of course, the Stoics also have a substantive view of the ultimate end—of what these formal features pick out. Here, again, they agree with their philosophical peers on a fundamental point: "they [the Stoics] say that being happy is the end."[6] But the Stoics also have a distinctive view of what happiness is, and what it means to live happily: they say that living happily is "living in agreement with nature."[7] What does it mean to "live in agreement with nature," and why do the Stoics think this is our ultimate end and highest good?

By "living in agreement with nature," the Stoics mean following right reason [*orthos logos*], also called the universal law, which structures and governs the activity of the cosmos.[8] That is, for rational beings like us, to live naturally is to live rationally, by doing what right reason tells us to do, and doing this because right reason says so. But this raises a further question: Why should living in accordance with right reason be our highest end?

The Stoics' argument for this claim is sometimes called the argument from *oikeiôsis*, often translated "appropriation." In rough outline, the argument rests on two key premises.

First, living rationally, as an end, is continuous with the ends we seek through the unspoiled, "primary" impulses of our early life.[9] If our unspoiled, "primary" impulses are any guide to what is really good, this lends support to the claim that living rationally is our highest end. Call this the *Primacy Principle*.

> *The Primacy Principle:* Our original, unspoiled, and "primary" impulses are an accurate guide to our ultimate end.

Second, the argument aims to show that living rationally gives us a "smooth flow of life": it is living in a harmonious, consistent, and orderly way, free from conflict. It is assumed that a harmonious life with a "smooth flow" is intuitively attractive and beneficial.[10] Call this the *Harmony Principle*.

> *The Harmony Principle:* Harmony, consistency, unity, and order—as opposed to conflict, disharmony, disunity, and disorder—are beneficial for us.

So, according to both our most basic impulses, and our intuitions about the benefits of living smoothly and harmoniously, we should conclude that living rationally is our highest good.

Let us now look at the argument from *oikeiôsis*[11] in more detail. It begins with a developmental account of how we come to grasp the ultimate end. The Stoics notice that from birth, all animals seek what is appropriate to their natural constitution.[12] That is, we all have a sense of what is suitable and beneficial for ourselves, given the kinds of creatures we are. For instance, we have a sense that it's appropriate to eat when hungry, to keep our bodies healthy, to avoid death, and to develop our various capacities. And because we love ourselves, we have impulses to pursue what is appropriate and beneficial, and to avoid what is harmful.[13] For human beings, this self-awareness and awareness of goodness, along with the resulting impulses, becomes more stable and more refined over time, until through "intelligence and reason," we are eventually able to understand "the order and so to speak harmony" in our actions—specifically, the pattern of our actions as being in agreement with nature.[14] At this point, the Stoics say, we understand the good itself for the first time.[15] "Good," here, is a technical term for the Stoics. In an innovative terminological and conceptual move, they distinguish goodness from mere value. Goodness (as opposed to value) is what really benefits us and makes our lives go well (as opposed to be merely rationally preferred, but not really beneficial).[16] *What* is the good that we come to understand? It is the very fact of harmony or agreement between our actions and nature. It is "the smooth flow of life, when all actions promote the harmony of the spirit dwelling in the individual man with the will of him who orders the universe."[17] And since our natures and our actions are specifically rational, "life according to reason rightly becomes the natural life."[18] Our ultimate end is a life lived in agreement with right reason.

At first glance, this developmental story may seem more like a description of how the Stoics came to hold their view of the ultimate end, and less like an argument for the truth of that view. However, if we invoke the *Primacy Principle* and the *Harmony Principle*, the argument begins to emerge. Very roughly: the developmental story shows that our mature ends are continuous with our "primary" impulses in particular ways; and the *Primacy* and *Harmony* principles explain why this continuity should mean that our mature ends are the correct ends for us to have.

Here are the details of how the argument works. With the *Primacy* and *Harmony* principles in hand, we may notice that the developmental story identifies two salient points of

continuity between our primary impulses and the end we recognize as mature adults. The story tells us that our earliest impulses in life are to seek out what is appropriate to our particular constitutions, where our constitutions are or are central parts of our particular natures. Similarly, the end we seek as mature adults is also what is appropriate to nature—but now, not only to our particular nature, but to nature as a whole, of which our particular natures are a part. Relatedly, the story also tells us that our primary impulses seek out what is *consistent* or *in agreement with* our particular natures—food when we're hungry, health when we're sick, and so on—and we try to avoid what is at odds with our natures. Similarly, the end we seek as mature adults is also a consistency and harmony with nature—but now, with nature as a whole.

Thus, *what* we find good (what is natural), and why we recognize it to be *good* (as a sort of agreement, consistency, and harmony) are in some respects fundamentally the same throughout our lives.[19] According to the *Primacy Principle*, the *continuity* between our primary impulses and our mature ends lends credibility to those mature ends, and therefore, to the claim that our ultimate end really is a life in accordance with reason. And according to the *Harmony Principle, what* is continuous between our primary impulses and our mature ends is something intuitively beneficial (harmony, consistency, unity, and order). In this way, the Stoics can use the developmental story to justify their claim that our ultimate end is living in accordance with right reason, which is harmonious and consistent with nature.

Next, we might ask *how* one goes about living in agreement with nature and right reason. The Stoics' answer is that we should cultivate virtue. As they say, "being happy … consists in living in accordance with virtue, in living in agreement, or what is the same, living in accordance with nature."[20] Virtue, on their view, is "consistent, firm, and unchangeable reason."[21] Even more specifically, this consistent state of reason is an art, skill or expertise [*technê*] "concerned with the whole of life."[22] The art of living—namely, virtue—crucially includes knowledge of what should be chosen or selected, and what should or should not be done.[23] The terminology of "choice" and "selection" is also technical for the Stoics: these terms mean, roughly, to assent to the impression that something is good, or to the impression that something is preferred or of value, respectively.[24] So to live in accordance with virtue is centrally a matter of choosing and selecting correctly, in accordance with the art of skill of living, and on the grounds that this is what right reason requires.

In rough outline, then, the logical structure of Stoics' view of our ultimate end is as follows. The ultimate end of action—by definition, the highest good, the ultimate object of desire, and something we can achieve through our own efforts—is the happy life or living happily. According to the argument from *oikeiôsis*, living happily is most fundamentally understood as living in agreement with nature, and by extension, as living in agreement with reason. And when we ask what we must do in order to live in accordance with nature, the answer is that we should cultivate and exercise the virtues—in other words, the art, skill, or expertise [*technê*] of living well. On the one hand, then, the Stoics place naturalness front and center in their account of the ultimate end. And on the other hand, both the formal and the substantive aspects of the Stoic account emphasize what is up to us. The end is something that depends only on our own efforts (in order to count as an ultimate end at all); and it consists in making correct rational choices and selections, which are activities entirely in our power (this is what counts as "living naturally" for us).[25] From these two points, we find that for the Stoics, the ultimate end is *correctly doing everything in our power—in other words, trying our best—to live and act in agreement with nature*.

Academic Criticisms

Philosophers associated with Plato's Academy engaged with the Stoic view of the end, and they did so from a broadly Socratic perspective. The Socrates of Plato's early dialogues explores the idea that knowledge, expertise, and virtue are very closely related, and he raises the question of whether there is a skill or expertise of living well.[26] As we have seen, the Stoics say that there *is* a skill or expertise of living well. The Academics, in turn, raise subtle questions about whether a "skill of living well" is even a coherent notion, or if it is, what this skill would look like and what its goal would be. As we will see, this critical conversation ultimately focuses on the Stoic view that our ultimate end is to "aim well" (to "try our best"), and the Academic objection that this is not good advice for the whole of life.

Carneades vs. the Stoics: Stage 1

The Academic Skeptic Carneades started a critical conversation with the Stoics about their account of the end. His opening objection addresses the Stoic claim that the ultimate end consists in correctly doing everything in our power ("trying our best") to live in agreement with nature, by making correct choices and selections of what is natural. Trying our best to achieve what is in agreement with nature cannot be our ultimate end, he says, because

> it is contrary to the common conception that life should have two ends or targets set before it and that all our actions should not be referred to just one thing.… If what is good is not the primary things in accordance with nature but the rational selection and taking of them and doing everything in one's power for the sake of getting these things, all actions must have this as their reference, viz., getting the primary things in accordance with nature. But if they think that people are in possession of the end without aiming at getting or desiring to get these things, something other than getting these must be the purpose to which the selection of them is referred. For selecting and taking those things with prudence is the end; but they themselves and getting them are not the end, but the underlying matter, as it were, which has selective value.
>
> (Plutarch, *Comm. Not.,* 1070F-1071E)

The trouble is that the activities in which we "try our best"—choosing and selecting—have their own teleological structure. As Carneades notes, when we choose or select something, it's usually not merely for the sake of the choosing or selecting itself. Our choices and selections always have an object—*what* we choose or select—and we bother to choose or select in order to achieve this object, or at least to pursue its achievement. But if correct choice and selection are supposed to be the ultimate end, because this is how we "aim well" and "try our best" to live in agreement with nature, then paradoxically, the ultimate end aims at another, further end. And by definition, this further end—achieving or pursuing the object of choice or selection—is paradoxically not supposed to be genuinely good, on the technical Stoic notion of goodness, but merely something with "selective value." So there now seem to be two ends of action implicit in the Stoic account of the end, neither of which can really be the ultimate end or the highest good. In this way, the Stoics seem to face an internal inconsistency in their theory of the end. Specifically, there seems to be an inconsistency between their substantial definition of the end in terms of choice or selection, and their formal definition of what it means to be an ultimate end.

Carneades vs. the Stoics: Stage 2

Cicero describes a Stoic response to Carneades's opening objection. In this response, the Stoics defend the idea that "trying our best," in the sense of "doing everything in our power to live in agreement with nature," can be an ultimate end. This is possible, they say, if we think of "aiming well" as the expression of a skill or expertise. To make this point, the Stoics use of the common ancient analogy between a person aiming at an end, and a skilled archer aiming at a target. In this analogy, Cicero says that we should not think of the skilled archer's ultimate goal as *hitting the target*. Rather, we should think of her goal as *doing everything she can to aim well*:

> If a man's object were to aim a spear or an arrow straight at something, his doing everything in his power to aim it straight would correspond to our doctrine of the final good. On that kind of analogy, this man must do everything to aim straight. And yet his doing everything to attain his object would be his end, so to speak, analogous to what we are calling the final good in life, whereas his striking the target would be something "to-be-selected," as it were, not "to-be-desired."
>
> (Cicero, *De Fin.* 3.22)

To see Cicero's point about how to identify the ultimate end of archery, we should focus on two key formal features of the Stoic ultimate end. The ultimate end is by definition something whose achievement is up to us; it is also, by definition, a standard of success or failure, doing better or worse, for whatever that aims at the end. Now suppose that we were trying to determine whether someone is good at archery. Is it enough to ask if she hits her target? Well, no. Someone may hit a target accidentally, without being skilled at archery. And there are cases in which someone is an expert archer, but fails to hit her target, because actually hitting the target depends on many factors beyond the control of even an expert archer. An expert archer can be expected to account for ordinary wind conditions and the usual obstacles, but failure to account for a once-in-a-millennium earthquake, for example, or for the nefarious plans of a saboteur, doesn't impugn her skill as an archer. These sorts of events are both outside her control, and outside the expertise of archery. But if this is right, then *hitting the target cannot be the ultimate end of archery*, according to the two formal features identified above. For hitting the target is neither necessary nor sufficient as a standard for determining someone's being good at archery.

How does this analysis of archery respond to Carneades's objection? Archery is a classic example of a skill or expertise, and we know that the Stoics conceived of virtue as a kind of skill or art of living. In this example, we see that *achieving the thing you aim* at is not an ultimate end of skilled activity, because it is not a standard for success or failure for that activity. Instead, if anything, the ultimate end of archery is *aiming well*, that is, *correctly doing everything in one's power to hit the target*. This is what sets the necessary and sufficient conditions for being a good archer, and is therefore the standard by which one can distinguish success or failure at archery.

From this point, the Stoics hope to show how their conception of the ultimate end does not commit them to two ends, and therefore (in a sense) to no ultimate ends. If the archery analogy allows us to associate *getting the objects of our choices and selections* with *hitting the target*, and *choosing and selecting well* with *aiming well*, we can see that the former is not really an end at all, whereas the latter is. In life as in archery, the ultimate end and normative standard of our activity is *correctly doing everything in our power to get what we aim at*. Put another way, the ultimate end for us is *trying our best* to

live in agreement with nature, and we can see this clearly when we understand "trying our best" to involve the cultivation and exercise of a *skill*—the skill or art of living—in making choices and selections.

Of course, actually getting the things we choose and select, like hitting the target in archery, may be consequences of achieving our ultimate end. But this is not to say that getting these things is a further end at which choosing, selecting, and "trying our best" aim. Here is where we find the famous Stoic distinction between the *skopos* [target] and the *telos* [end] of action: the *telos* of our actions is the end that is up to us—"aiming well," trying our best to live in agreement with nature—while the *skopos* of our actions is the target that we may or may not succeed in hitting—happiness, or living happily.[27] In this way, we can see how the Stoics might defend their original position on the ultimate end of action. It is really trying our best, in the sense of choosing and selecting well, that is the ultimate end (the *telos*). Getting what we choose and select is not an end at all, but a target (a *skopos*) at which we aim when we are aiming well. Thus, the archery analogy purports to show how the formal features of the Stoics' ultimate end are consistent with its substantive features.

Carneades vs. the Stoics: Stage 3

In response to the archery analogy, Carneades presents his second objection. This third stage of the conversation with the Stoics focuses on the proposal that "trying your best" can be an ultimate end if we understand it as an expression of a skill or expertise. While Carneades engages directly with the Stoics here, we can also find the underlying Socratic preoccupation with what expertise is, and whether there could be such a thing as an expertise or skill of living well:

> No expertise can originate simply from itself. Its sphere of activity is always something extraneous. There is no need to develop this point with examples; for it is evident that no expertise is concerned just with itself, but the expertise and its object are distinct. Since, then, corresponding to medicine as the expertise in living, it must be the case that prudence derives its constitution and origin from something else.
>
> (Cicero, *De Fin.,* 5.16)

Here, Carneades makes a general point about the teleological structure of skill or expertise: each skill or expertise is directed toward, and is defined by, something other than the skill itself. Medicine is concerned with and aims at health; navigation is concerned with and aims at directions to one's destination; archery is concerned with and aims at hitting targets with arrows; and so on.

Carneades thinks this presents a problem for Cicero's archery analogy in the following way. Cicero says that the ultimate goal of archery is *to correctly do everything in one's power to hit the target*, because this is what is really in the archer's control, and is therefore the proper standard for evaluating whether someone is a good archer. But this description of the ultimate goal of archery seems to imply that the goal is just *to exercise the skill of archery as much as possible*. After all, what could it mean to "correctly do everything in your power" in some domain, except to exercise your skill in that domain? But if so, it seems that the ultimate end of a skill is just to exercise that skill. Skills would then not be concerned with, or aim at, a distinct object. They would be concerned with, and aim at, "exercising the skill."

Of course, it may be true, and not trivially so, that the ultimate goal of having a skill is to exercise it. But I suspect Carneades would reply that *what it means* to exercise a given skill is still to be spelled out in terms of an object other than the skill itself. To exercise medical expertise is at least in part to try to produce health in one's patients. It is not merely to "do medical things," as if this did not mean trying to heal one's patients. To exercise the skill of archery is at least in part to try to hit a target with arrows. It is not merely to "perform archery skillfully," as if this did not mean trying to hit a target. And so on with other skills. So, if "trying your best" involves cultivating and exercising some skill, this skill must involve something more than the activity of "trying your best."

But if this is right, then the Stoic analysis of the ultimate end of action is incorrect. They seem to say that our ultimate end is what we aim at when we have the skill or art of living, that is, when we have virtue. And using the archery analogy, they go on to say that the goal of this skill is to "correctly do everything on our power to live well"—which arguably amounts to "exercising the skill of living." But according to Carneades, no skill aims merely at its own exercise. So, the Stoics' account must have gone wrong somewhere. They must admit either that virtue or right reason is not a genuine skill or expertise (because it aims only at its own exercise); or that the ultimate end of action is not only right reason, but also a distinct object that the art of living aims to achieve (in order to defend the notion of a genuine skill or art of living). Either way, according to Carneades, the Stoic account has again failed to reconcile the formal features of the ultimate end with its substantive features. "Trying your best," in the sense of exercising a skill of living well, can't be an ultimate end.

Carneades vs. the Stoics: Stage 4

The Stoic response to Carneades' account of skills is to deny, with respect to certain salient examples, that all skills are concerned with and defined by some distinct object. Perhaps some skills like cobblery and housebuilding are like this. But what about skills in games or sports? The Stoic Epictetus says the following[28]:

> Socrates [at his trial] was like a man playing ball. And at that time and place, what was the ball that he was playing with? Imprisonment, exile, drinking poison, being deprived of wife, leaving children orphans. These were the things with which he was playing, but nonetheless he played and handled the ball in good form. So ought we also to act, exhibiting the ball-player's carefulness about the game but the same indifference about the object played with, as being a mere ball. For *a man ought by all means to strive to show his skill in regard to … external materials, yet without making the material a part of himself, but merely lavishing his skill in regard to it, whatever it may be*.
>
> (Epictetus, *Diss.,* II.5–15)

In this passage, Epictetus describes the skill of playing a game—like a game of catch—as having a particular teleological structure. We can see this teleological structure, again, by reflecting on how we evaluate someone's skill at playing catch. With respect to the game of catch, we don't let a "mere ball" set the evaluative standards for playing the game. Rather, we determine whether someone is good at catch by asking whether she "plays and handles the ball in good form" and whether she is "careful about the game." But "playing and handling the ball in good form" and "being careful about the game" seem to be roughly equivalent to "showing one's skill at the game." So, if the normative standards and the end

of a practice coincide, it seems that the ultimate end or goal of playing catch is roughly *to exercise the skill of playing catch as much as possible*. Here, Epictetus suggests, we have found a skill that does not have an ultimate end that is distinct from the skill itself.

We can motivate Epictetus's point even further. As a game, catch isn't competitive; it isn't useful; and it doesn't obviously produce a product. So, the skill of playing catch cannot aim at winning, at some extrinsic use, or at some product as an end distinct from the skill itself. Moreover, knowledge of this game is fairly completely described as "knowing how to play catch." It would be hard to identify any other, distinct domain or subject-matter that would adequately define this sort of knowledge. So, the skill of playing catch does not even have a separate subject or domain that fully defines the sort of knowledge that the skill involves. In these ways, too, it seems that the skill of playing catch has no distinct end or object, and there is no possible gap between playing catch skillfully and knowledgeably, and achieving the end that catch aims at.

If this is true of the game of catch, then Carneades's objection to the archery example does not succeed. It is not the case that *all* skills have a distinct end or object. And if not all skills do, perhaps the skill or art of living does not either, as Epictetus suggests. Consider Socrates at his trial. To determine whether Socrates acted well or badly at trial, the Stoics say, we don't examine what became of the "ball" he was playing with—whether, in the end, he retained his freedom, secured the futures of his wife and children, or even saved his own life. Instead, if we really want to know whether Socrates acted well or badly, we look to his "quality of play"—whether he handled the accusations against him, his own arguments, and the consequences of his trial, "skillfully" and "carefully" to the extent that this was up to him. This, they say, is what the skill of life looks like in action. And the exercise of this very skill—skillfully "trying our best" to live in accordance with nature—is the ultimate end and highest good we can achieve.

Carneades vs. the Stoics: Coda

One question we might be left with after this exchange is the following. *Is* virtue, the skill or art of living, really like the skill of playing catch? It seems rather un-Stoic to compare virtuous activity to a childish game. One might suspect that the reason the skill of catch seems to have no end beyond itself is not because it is an ultimate end, but because it's so trivial as to be nearly pointless. And surely this is precisely not the conclusion we should draw about Stoic virtue. In response to this criticism, we might generously reply that the example of catch may not be an intended as a direct analogy to living well, but rather to the sort of exercise and preparation one would need to succeed at the more important game of life. Still, being well prepared for living well isn't the same thing as actually living well. In these respects we might still wonder how much the catch analogy tells us about the teleological structure of virtue and of actually living well.

So perhaps Epictetus's defense of Stoicism might benefit from another example of a skill that has the same teleological structure as catch, but makes the connection to virtue more compelling. Consider a skilled dancer. Arguably, when she dances, it is not essential that she produces a product or does something useful for a further end. Of course, it is possible to dance in order to achieve some other goal—say, to win at a dance competition—but this isn't a necessary part of dancing skillfully, and this other goal doesn't set the standards by which we determine who is a good dancer. Instead, when an expert dancer dances, she expresses herself and her skill. She dances for the sake of the dance, in order to do what she knows how to do. An expert dancer is precisely one who "exhibits carefulness about the dance," as Epictetus might say, but "indifference" about any of the

extrinsic facts about her dancing—whether anyone else is watching, or appreciates or understands her dance. She simply "lavishes her skill" on her performance.

If this is a plausible account of expert dancing, then it might give us a more convincing analogy between skill and Stoic virtue. A virtuous life might not be much like a game of catch, but it might be like an intricate, skillful dance. If skillful dancing seems not to have an end beyond itself, this is probably not because it has no point, but because it is more like an end in itself, which makes it more akin to virtue. Perhaps in spite of the Socratic example, then (the image of Socrates doing ballet may be more odd than helpful here), Epictetus's argument about the teleological structure of virtue might be strengthened by adding the example of dance as a skill which, *contra* Carneades, seems not to have an end beyond itself. If this is right, the Stoics might further advance their argument that there is no conflict between the end's formal features, and its substantive features—in short, that "trying your best" and "aiming well," in a sense that involves the exercise of a skill, can indeed count as a final end.

Antiochus vs. the Stoics: Stage 1

Aside from Carneades, Antiochus of Ascalon was another Academic philosopher who engaged with Stoic views about the end. After some time as a Skeptic, Antiochus later seemed to give up his Skeptical perspective to adopt a positive philosophical theory.[29] For our purposes, his Skeptical credentials are less important than his objections to the Stoic account of the ultimate end. His objections are complementary to those from his Academic compatriot Carneades, because Antiochus targets the substance of the Stoic view directly, by targeting the argument from *oikeiôsis*.

Antiochus's main complaint is that the argument from *oikeiôsis* focuses too much on our rational natures and ignores our natural bodies. In other words, it defines the highest good exclusively in psychological terms, while neglecting other parts of us. He states his objection as follows:

> No one will dispute that the supreme and final End, the thing ultimately desirable, is analogous for all natural species alike. For love of self is inherent in every species; since what species exists that ever abandons itself or any part of itself, or any habit or faculty of any such part, or any of the things, whether processes or states, that are in accordance with its nature? What species ever forgot its own original constitution? Assuredly there is not one that does not retain its own proper faculty from start to finish. How then came it about that, of all the existing species, mankind alone should relinquish man's nature, forget the body, and find its Chief Good not in the whole man but in a part of man?
>
> (Cicero, *De Fin.* IV.32–33)

Antiochus's worry takes seriously what I have called the *Primacy Principle* and its role in the argument from *oikeiôsis*. He reminds us that many of our earliest impulses—like the primary impulses of other animals—are focused on what is natural and appropriate for our bodies.[30] In particular, we, like other animals, naturally avoid injury, illness, and physical pain, and we go for health, strength, and bodily pleasure.[31] These impulses reveal that an awareness of our bodies is part of our earliest self-awareness, and that love of our bodies is part of our original self-love. These impulses also often persist throughout our lives. So why should we not think, according to the Stoics' own *Primacy Principle*, that the correct view of our highest end includes the perfection of our bodies, including states like health,

strength, and bodily pleasure? We are, by nature, *embodied* reasoners, and our mature impulses and goals with respect to being physically healthy and pain-free are continuous with our primary impulses. Why should living "in agreement with nature," for us, not include bodily virtues and perfections?

In this argument, Antiochus's basic intuition seems to be this: our bodies are a natural part of our *selves*. Like all other animals, we are naturally embodied creatures who do not live solely "in our heads," so to speak. From the time we are born and throughout our lives, our impulses for self-defense are often driven by an instinctive horror of physical injury and our own physical death. Our processes of self-discovery and self-assertion as young children always deeply involve our bodies. Our bodies concern us in a special way, and they shape our sense of our place in the world. This should tell us that our bodies are not just any old indifferent things, like wealth or a good reputation. They are partly definitive of *who we are*.

To the extent that the argument from *oikeiôsis* develops a theory of the ultimate end on the basis of our primary instincts for *self*-love and *self*-preservation, then, it ought to conclude that the perfection of our bodies is part of the ultimate end. By the same token, it ought also to conclude that "trying our best" can't be the whole of our ultimate end. As Antiochus emphasizes, we are not purely psychological creatures, and trying and aiming are primarily psychological activities. So, to the extent that the Stoics want to say that "trying our best" and "aiming well" are the ultimate end, their theory of the end is at best incomplete.

Antiochus vs. the Stoics: Stage 2

We may not have a record of the Stoics' reply to Antiochus's objection, but we can imagine what they might say. His objection depends on the idea that, according to the Stoics, our primary impulses are for self-love and self-preservation. This is why it would be relevant to the Stoic theory of the end that our bodies are part of our selves: if the latter were true, and if our primary impulses were for self-love and self-preservation, then bodily preservation and perfection are among our primary impulses, and therefore should be included in our ultimate end. Our end can't be exhausted by a psychological activity of aiming or trying our best.

But the Stoics might reply that self-love and self-preservation are *not* primary impulses. According to the argument from *oikeiôsis*, our primary impulses are for what is *appropriate to our natures*. [32] In the beginning, our understanding of what is appropriate is limited by what we understand about ourselves and our natures. Infants have impulses for bodily protection and self-preservation because an awareness of their own bodies (and how to use them) is their earliest grasp of what is natural for them, and what is appropriate to that nature. It is not by changing our conception of our *self*, but by better understanding *nature*—nature in the cosmos as a whole, not just in ourselves—that we later come to see right reason as our ultimate end.[33] So if Antiochus worries that the Stoic theory of the good ignores the bodily parts of our selves, that's because he has misunderstood the argument from *oikeiôsis* in the first place. In the argument, the Stoics apply the *Primacy Principle*, not to our self-love *per se*, but to our impulses to pursue what is *naturally appropriate*, given the kinds of creatures we are. That is how they reach the conclusion that our ultimate end is to "aim well," using right reason.

Antiochus vs. the Stoics: Coda

We may agree with the Stoics that Antiochus has, in a key respect, misunderstood the argument from *oikeiôsis*. However, there is another worry in the vicinity of Antiochus's

objection that we might still want to consider. This other worry brings us back to the distinction between formal and substantive aspects of Stoic theory of the end, and whether these parts of the Stoic theory fit together in the idea of "trying our best."

Recall that part of *what it is* to be an ultimate end is to be an evaluative standard. This idea played a prominent role in the conversation between Carneades and the Stoics, about whether "aiming well" or "trying your best" can be an ultimate end. In that conversation, specifically in the archery analogy, it seemed natural to defend the Stoic claim that "aiming well" or "trying your best" is the ultimate end by asking how we evaluate whether someone is a good archer. If someone is a good archer when she *correctly does everything in her power to hit the target* ("tries her best" to hit it), then this must be the ultimate end of archery. And if being a good human being involves virtue, and virtue is a skill like archery, then *correctly doing everything in our power to live virtuously, in agreement with nature* ("trying our best" to live this way) is plausibly our ultimate end too.

Here is the connection to Antiochus. Rightly or wrongly, Antiochus interprets the Stoic theory of the end as a theory about the end of our *self*—specifically, as the end promoted by our self-love. And in the archery analogy, the idea that "aiming well at the target" is the ultimate end of archery comes out most clearly from asking *What makes someone a good archer*? or *How do we determine whether this person is doing well at archery*? Notice that in asking these questions, we are asking primarily about how to evaluate an *archer*—of a particular kind of *agent*—and her activities *qua* archer. And when we answer these questions by saying that she does well by "aiming well at the target," it is clear, again, that the subject of evaluation is the *agent and her activities*. So, if this standard of evaluation is the ultimate end, then it is, in the first instance, the end *of an agent and her activities*.

This point is significant because there might be a distinction between an archer (the person) and a life of archery (say, a career as an archer) with respect to their standards of evaluation. An archer who misses her target through no fault of her own can still be a good *archer*. But a career in archery that involves missing the target may or may not count as a good *archery career*. Intuitively, a *good archery career* requires some amount of success in actually hitting targets. It would be possible for someone to be a *good archer* without having a *good archery career*, precisely because "aiming well at the target" is intuitively not a sufficient standard for evaluating a career—a "life of archery." But if archers and archery careers have different standards of evaluation, then because ends are standards of evaluation, we might be tempted to conclude that they have different ultimate ends as well.

What does this tell us about the Stoic theory of the end? If we take the archery analogy seriously, these points suggest that there might be a difference between the ultimate end of a *human being*—a human "self," if you're Antiochus—and the ultimate end of a *human life*. The archery analogy may or may not show us that "aiming well" ("trying our best") is the ultimate end of a *human being*. But even if it does, this may not tell us the ultimate end of a human *life*. In particular, if human lives are like archery careers, it may be that their ultimate end requires real success in "hitting our target," not merely "trying our best" to do so. We may need to actually achieve the things in agreement with nature in order to live a good human life. Perhaps, then, Antiochus's objection to the Stoics was on to something, despite its flaws. The Stoics' use of the archery analogy focuses on agents as subjects of evaluation, and the bearers of the ultimate end. As a result, Antiochus might say it offers a "self-focused" theory of the ultimate end. But if we want to know, not only what makes someone a good person, but what makes her life a well-lived life, we may need a different theory. And to the extent that the Stoics promise to give us a theory of the ultimate end of *life*, their conversation with the Academics suggests that they haven't kept that promise.

Conclusion

Is "try your best" good advice for a well lived life? Given the debate between the Stoics and the Academics, the answer may be unclear. Still, the debate does raise some provocative questions. Does "trying our best" require us to cultivate and exercise *expertise*? Is that what "our *best*" in this advice refers to—some sort of skill or art? If so, are we more or less persuaded that this is good advice? And might "try your best" be better advice for being a good *person* than for living a good *life*? What, if anything, is the difference between being good and living well?

Notes

1 Stobaeus 3.16.
2 Stobaeus 2.46, 5–7; 76, 22–23.
3 Stobaeus 2.63, 25–64, 12.
4 See e.g. *NE* I.1–2; DL 2.88–90, 7.137–138, 139–154.
5 Cicero, *Tusc.* V.40–41.
6 Stobaeus 3.16.
7 DL 7.87.
8 DL 7.88–89. For the ethical implications of Stoic physics, see e.g. Cooper 2012, Menn 1995. For a different perspective on the relationship between Stoic physics and ethics, see e.g. Annas 1993.
9 For a rigorous account of how this is so, see Klein 2016. See also Engberg-Pedersen 1990, Brunschwig 1986. There is significant controversy in the literature about whether "primary" impulses are "primary" merely in the sense of "earliest in time" (in which case they might be supplanted later), or "primary" in the sense of "fundamental" or "dominant" (in which case they shape our motives throughout our lives). Klein 2016, pp. 155–9, describes this controversy in detail. I try to remain neutral on this point here, while emphasizing that continuity between "primary" and later impulses is of central importance to the argument from *oikeiôsis.*
10 Not everyone understands the argument as centrally involving this principle. Striker 1996, for instance, suggests that the foundation of the argument is simply that reason—or rational perfection—is the highest good, and that living in agreement with nature is valuable because, for human beings, living naturally is living rationally.
11 We get different versions of this argument from Cicero, from Diogenes Laertius, and from Seneca. The argument I will reconstruct here is mainly Cicero's, with a crucial supplement from Diogenes.
12 DL 7.85; Cicero, *De Fin.*, III.16.
13 Cicero, *De Fin.* III.16–21, DL 7.85–88.
14 Cicero, *De Fin.,* III.21.
15 Cicero, *De Fin.* III.20–21.
16 For the Stoic idea that the good is what benefits, see DL 7.101–103. For discussion of this thought-provoking distinction, see e.g. Frede 2001, Vogt 2008.
17 DL 7.87.
18 DL 7.86–87. For further, helpful discussion of this point, see Frede 2001.
19 There is significant controversy among scholars about the extent to which our primary and mature ends are the same on the Stoic theory. Some scholars emphasize the similarity, in virtue of their connection to our "primary" impulses: see e.g. Inwood 1985 and Pembroke 1971. Others emphasize the discontinuity between the ends of selfish, non-rational infants and the sometimes-altruistic ends of rational adults: see e.g. Frede 1994 and Striker 1996. I will not take a stand here on whether our ends should be described as *overall* continuous or discontinuous throughout our lives. The two similarities I have identified are, I think, sufficient to elucidate the key point of the argument from *oikeiôsis*.
20 Stobaeus 3.16.
21 Plutarch, *On Moral Virtue*, 44e-441d; LS 61b8.
22 Stobaeus 2.66,14–67, 4.
23 Stobaeus 2.59, 4–60, 2.
24 Stobaeus 2.78,7–12. For more on the notion of "assent" in Stoicism, see Hensley's chapter in this volume, "Stoic Epistemology."

25 For the sense in which choices and selections are voluntary, see e.g. *SVF* 2.1000,5–15; Cicero, *De Fat.*, 39–44; Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.* 47,1055f-1056d.
26 For helpful discussion of this point, see e.g. Cooper 2004 and Vogt 2014.
27 For the Stoic distinction between the *skopos* and the *telos*, see e.g. *SFV* 3.63, Stobaeus 2.77, 112.
28 I am indebted to Klein 2014 for drawing my attention to this passage.
29 For an extensive treatment of Antiochus's philosophy, see Sedley 2012.
30 DL 7.85; Cicero, *De Fin.*, III.16.
31 Cicero, *De Fin*., III.16–21, DL 7.85–88.
32 Cicero, *De Fin.*, III.16.
33 Thank you to Katja Vogt for putting the point to me this way.

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PART VI

The Hellenistic Legacy in Contemporary Issues

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IS SKEPTICISM NATURAL?

Ancient and Modern Perspectives

Richard Bett

Ancient and Modern Skepticism Contrasted

The picture of skepticism in philosophy today, at least in the English-speaking world, is different in several ways from the skepticism of the ancient Greco-Roman world. First, there is a difference in subject-matter. Skepticism nowadays is regarded largely, if not entirely, as a certain sort of position in epistemology; it consists in denying that we can have knowledge, or perhaps even reasonable belief, about some major area in which we normally take ourselves to have these things. The "external world" (that is, the world independent of our immediate experience), other minds besides our own, and induction are central examples. The recent volume *Skepticism: from Antiquity to the Present* (Machuca & Reed 2018) includes fourteen chapters in its contemporary section, of which twelve are clearly on epistemological topics; of the two possible exceptions, one, on moral skepticism, begins "The moral skeptic denies (or at least refuses to affirm) that anyone has moral knowledge" (Joyce 2018: 714),[1] while the other, on religious skepticism, after stating at the outset that in a loose usage anyone who is negative about religion may be called a religious skeptic, adds that in a "more illuminating understanding" (to be followed in the chapter), religious skepticism has to do with "*being in doubt*" (Schellenberg 2018: 727). Clearly, skepticism as understood today revolves around questions concerning knowledge or its absence.

But in antiquity it was not like this. To take just the surviving works of Sextus Empiricus, skepticism could be, and was, applied to issues in all three standard areas of philosophy—logic (including what we call epistemology, but much else besides), physics, and ethics—as well as to numerous specialized sciences: grammar, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astrology, and music. And while Sextus' arguments often take the form of questioning the justification for theories in these areas, they are also often to the effect that the basic entities accepted in these theories do not exist, with issues concerning our ability to know about these entities playing no part in the discussion. Epistemology was not at the *center* of skepticism in the ancient world, as it is today.

I just said that skepticism as understood today is a certain sort of position: that is, a conclusion supported by some arguments. In this respect, too, it differs from skepticism in antiquity. Ancient skepticism was not a claim or a thesis; rather, it was a certain sort of *attitude*—an attitude of suspension of judgment. The skeptic brings about suspension

of judgment on some topic, through the juxtaposition of equally powerful opposing considerations. These considerations very often take the form of arguments, though not always; sometimes they consist in everyday impressions, such as that there are objects in motion of various kinds. As Sextus says, the skeptic's "ability" is that of placing in opposition "things that appear and things that are thought" (*PH* 1.8). But even when arguments are involved (and even when, like those I referred to above as "Sextus' arguments," they give every appearance of having been devised by the skeptics themselves), the skeptic is not in the business of endorsing the conclusions of those arguments. Instead, the point is to achieve a situation of equipoise, where suspension of judgment is the only possible result.[2] As Sextus' characterization of skepticism as an "ability" (*dunamis, PH* 1.8) implies, the ancient skeptic does not *assert* something, but *does* something—namely, generates suspension of judgment.

I have focused so far on Sextus, but the points I have considered seem to be common ground between him and the skeptical thinkers in the Hellenistic period of Plato's Academy, primarily Arcesilaus and Carneades—though our evidence for them is incomplete and indirect. All these also share a further point that sharply distinguishes them from the image of the skeptic in contemporary philosophy. Skepticism in antiquity was regarded as something to be lived, rather than just pondered in a theoretical frame of mind. In this respect it was no different from any other ancient philosophical outlook; it was universally assumed that any philosophy worth taking seriously had to be possible to incorporate into one's life. Many non-skeptical philosophers thought that skepticism did not meet this standard, which is why the so-called *apraxia*, or "inactivity" objection—that suspension of judgment, at least on the scale the skeptics purported to adopt it, was impossible to put into practice—was a major challenge.[3] But the skeptics had answers to this. Arcesilaus and Carneades clearly took the trouble to show that suspension of judgment was not incompatible with living a human life, or even with happiness (Sextus, *M* 7.158, 166–89, Cicero, *Acad*. 2.99–104). And Sextus, in common with his forebears in the Pyrrhonian skeptical tradition (claiming inspiration from the figure of Pyrrho of Elis), took suspension of judgment to have an important practical payoff, namely *ataraxia* or freedom from worry; skepticism, then, was not only practically possible, but an outlook to be welcomed on practical grounds.

The contrast with skepticism as discussed today could hardly be more stark. For one thing, it is very unusual for philosophers today to identify themselves as skeptics (which is why I have used circumlocutions like "the image of the skeptic," "skepticism as currently discussed," etc.); skepticism is usually seen as a threat to be dispelled, not as an attitude to be willingly adopted. This may be less true of moral skepticism than of strictly epistemological skepticism, but self-identified skeptics on any topic today are few and far between. Moreover, whether or not one decides to adopt it, skepticism today is rarely, if ever, even considered as something to be lived; instead, it is treated as purely theoretical. This is true even of moral skepticism, which one might have thought would be closer to the practical domain; those who profess some form of moral skepticism seem to see no problem in holding on to ordinary moral opinions.[4] Equally, on epistemological topics narrowly understood, there is never any suggestion that one might actually give up the everyday practices of justification, claiming to be sure, etc. that skepticism on those topics seems to put into question.

These differences are relatively straightforward. In what follows I would like to consider some differences, and also some similarities, that are less obvious. What I have in mind are the varying attitudes in ancient Greek and contemporary philosophy concerning whether, or in what ways, skepticism is either natural or unnatural. The lines of thinking that lead to

skepticism are often portrayed in recent philosophy as extremely natural for us—alarmingly so, seeing that the conclusion is one that almost everyone today wants to resist. But there are others who emphasize, by contrast, the *un*natural character of skeptical ways of thinking, at least by comparison with our everyday practices of justification, assessment of knowledge claims, etc. What is meant by "natural" in this context is not generally spelled out. But a natural attitude or line of thought, as the philosophers who address this topic intend the term, seems to be one that any normal person would unreflectively adopt, or one that any normal person who did reflect on it, unprompted by any particular theoretical or ideological agenda, would find themselves inclined to accept—one that, as we might put it, "just feels right." By contrast, an unnatural line of thought would be one that a person would be drawn to only given certain specific and questionable assumptions, of which they might or might not be conscious. There is, of course, a normative element in the phrase "any normal person," appealing implicitly to some conception of human nature; but none of the philosophers I shall discuss delve into that topic to any extent. Nonetheless, the notion of naturalness employed here seems intuitive enough.

The ancient skeptics do not have much to say explicitly about whether or how skepticism is natural or the opposite. But I think it is not hard to infer certain attitudes of theirs that would bear upon this subject, and these I will try to explicate. In taking up these questions on the modern side, I will venture beyond just the Anglophone philosophy of the past few decades. For in rendering these verdicts on the naturalness or otherwise of skepticism, contemporary philosophers often appeal to a history of treatments of skepticism that extends back to Descartes.

Is Skepticism Natural? Modern Perspectives

Hume makes a sharp distinction between the attitudes we hold in everyday life, and those we adopt when thinking philosophically, including skeptically. He is certainly not the first to draw some such distinction; Descartes' "project of pure enquiry," as it has been called (Williams 1978), is explicitly undertaken from a perspective detached from everyday life, with a view to finding a foundation for knowledge that does not depend on possibly questionable everyday assumptions. He is also certainly not the last, and we will explore this further. But it is useful to begin with Hume, because he puts into clear focus the issue about the naturalness or otherwise of skeptical lines of thought. For Hume, it is the everyday attitudes, not those entertained when one is philosophizing in a skeptical vein, that are almost always described as the natural ones. In the famous Conclusion of the first book of his *Treatise of Human Nature*, he vividly describes the intellectual despair that skeptical thinking can induce, but then speaks of how dinner and a game of backgammon with friends makes this anxiety seem "cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous." It is the latter frame of mind that he calls his "natural propensity" (Hume 1978: 269), and it has a powerful influence even on those like himself who are inclined to philosophy. Nor is this a bad thing, given that, as he sees it, the pure activity of the understanding leads to it undermining itself; "We save ourselves from this total scepticism," he says, only because these kinds of abstract thinking—these "remote views of things," in his words—come to us much less readily than everyday views, "which are more easy and natural" (268). Indeed, the very effort to engage in pure philosophical reasoning, he suggests, requires that he "must strive against the current of nature" (269). A similar picture appears in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, where he says that when skeptical principles "are put in opposition to the more powerful principles of our nature, they vanish like smoke, and leave the most determined sceptic in the same condition as other mortals" (Hume 1977: 109–10).

Hume, then, sees our habitual trust in our senses and in ordinary ways of thinking as natural, and it would seem to follow that philosophical reasoning, especially when it leads in a skeptical direction, so as to undermine those ordinary ways of thinking—as, in his hands, it often does—is contrary to nature. Yet an obvious question at this point might be, is not our ability to reason also part of human nature? And if so, does this not make skepticism itself natural, if this is where our reasoning points? While Hume does not generally seem to view the matter this way, in one place in the *Enquiry*, speaking of a skeptical line of argument that "shocks the clearest and most natural principles of human reason," he says that "what renders the matter more extraordinary, is, that these seemingly absurd opinions are supported by a chain of reasoning, the clearest and most natural" (Hume 1977: 107–8). So, it looks as if Hume is not immune to the suspicion that there is also something natural about the kind of reasoning that leads to skepticism.

Whatever we may think about Hume, that is certainly a thought that has occurred to some philosophers more recently. Barry Stroud, in his landmark book *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Stroud 1984), says of the skeptical reasoning in Descartes' first *Meditation* that

> we find it immediately gripping. It appeals to something deep in our nature and seems to raise a real problem about the human condition. It is natural to feel that either we must accept the literal truth of the conclusion that we can know nothing about the world around us, or else we must somehow show that it is not true.
>
> (39)

Of course, that is by no means the end of the story. Stroud locates this sense of the naturalness of skepticism in a certain traditional conception of objectivity—"the idea that the world is there quite independently of human knowledge and belief"—that itself seems to consist of "platitudes we would all accept" (82). Hence the only ways to avoid skepticism would be to reject that conception of objectivity, or to show that skeptical reasoning actually depends on covert assumptions that are anything but platitudes. Much of the book consists of an examination of various attempts to do the latter, none of which Stroud ultimately finds satisfactory. The outcome is that skepticism remains unrefuted; and though there also remains the overriding thought that there *must* be something wrong with that, Stroud emphasizes that reflection on this situation itself may "reveal something deep or important about human knowledge or human nature or the urge to understand them philosophically" (ix).

Stroud is a central example of this kind of picture, but he is by no means the only one. Bernard Williams, in writing about Descartes' project, also spoke of knowledge itself as having "something in it which offers a standing invitation to scepticism" (Williams 1978: 64); this "something" he refers to as the "absolute conception of reality," which is very much the same as the conception of objectivity outlined by Stroud. And Thomas Nagel, in his book *The View from Nowhere* (Nagel 1986), develops the idea of a pair of human perspectives, which he calls subjective and objective, and the impossibility of fully combining them. Skepticism is one manifestation of the objective perspective—more specifically, it consists in the *idea* of a *fully* objective perspective, along with the recognition that we could never actually occupy such a perspective; as such, skepticism "is revealing and not refutable" (7). But since the objective perspective is not the only one—and since the objective perspective itself, in different and less extreme manifestations, is also responsible for achievements such as natural science and morality—skepticism is not something that we can hold consistently in view. These dual perspectives and the tension between them, Nagel says, are "a problem that

faces every creature with the impulse and the capacity to transcend its particular point of view and to conceive of the world as a whole" (3). It now looks as if there is a bifurcated human nature: the attitudes that Hume described as natural make up one side of the story, but (as Hume only rarely acknowledged) there is also an equally natural mindset that contains within it an impulse towards skepticism.

But not everyone is convinced. The very title of Michael Williams' book *Unnatural Doubts* (Williams 1996) reveals his dissent. After drawing attention to the kind of thinking I have just described, in all these philosophers and more, Williams goes on to develop a view according to which skeptical doubt is very far from being natural; it is, rather, the product of a particular theoretical conception. Stated most generally, this can be called "epistemological realism," which is the idea that "our knowledge of the world" amounts to "a genuine totality, and thus … a possible object of wholesale assessment" (113), an idea that itself depends on epistemological foundationalism—that is, the view that knowledge as such must be based on some kind of common and fixed starting-points. But, as Williams argues, this idea is by no means self-evident, and in fact what counts as knowledge, and the kinds of standards invoked for calling it knowledge, in different contexts vary so much that there is no reason to think of knowledge as forming such a unified totality. The result is that "there is no such thing as knowledge of the external world" (xii), or of any of the other broad categories I referred to as I began. This does not mean we cannot know the kinds of things we ordinarily take ourselves to know—quite the opposite; it means that knowledge of the external world (or of other minds, or whatever) does not form a genuine kind that can, as a whole, be the object of philosophical scrutiny. Thus, Williams concludes that "The Humean condition and the human condition are not the same" (359).[5]

Williams' book was a powerful reply to those disposed to see skeptical reasoning as something natural. However, that feeling has not entirely gone away, and again this is apparent in the titles of two more recent books. Stroud's views evolved, and he was later inclined to regard the very conception of a pure objectivity—the conception that, as we saw, seems to make skepticism irresistible—as ultimately not available to us. But his more recent book *Engagement and Metaphysical Dissatisfaction* (Stroud 2011) still evinces a sense that there is something disappointing about that state of affairs, or, in Stroud's own words, that we have "a metaphysical urge, or need, that cannot be denied" (159)—that is, a powerful *aspiration* towards such an objective viewpoint, even if it is bound to remain unfulfilled. And once again, reflection about this is, in effect, reflection about "the human condition" (160). More recently still, Duncan Pritchard's book *Epistemic Angst* (Pritchard 2016) purports to solve the problem of skepticism. The solution is complicated, but we need not concern ourselves with that; my interest is in where Pritchard thinks this leaves us. Despite the fact that the skeptical challenge is said to have been resolved, and our epistemic angst therefore relieved, there is nonetheless still a descendant of that angst, an anxiety that he calls "epistemic vertigo." And this is due to "the fact that radical skepticism, while being in many ways very unnatural … nonetheless arises out of very natural intellectual inclinations and aspirations," which he goes on to describe as centering around a drive towards "a *completely* detached perspective" (187), something that again looks very like the conception of objectivity identified by Stroud and Bernard Williams.

Obviously, I have only scratched the surface of a large and complicated topic. But I hope I have said enough to show that the question of whether, and how, skeptical reasoning is natural or unnatural is an important bone of contention in contemporary Anglophone philosophy and some of its antecedents. In the remainder of the paper, I want to try to see what the ancient Greco-Roman skeptics might have thought about this topic—focusing, as before, mainly on Sextus Empiricus.

Is Skepticism Natural? Ancient Greek Perspectives

We may start, however, with a suggestive remark attributed to Pyrrho, the supposed original skeptic. We are told that Pyrrho was once scared by a dog that attacked him, and in response to someone who criticized his failure to maintain skeptical equanimity, said that "it was difficult entirely to strip off one's humanity; but that one should fight as much as possible against troubles, first in deeds, and failing that, at least in words" (DL 9.66). The idea seems to be that our natural human tendency is to be troubled by everyday annoyances such as snarling dogs, but that it would be better if one could rise above this. That is a difficult task, but it is worth doing the best one can to cease being concerned with such matters; a truly skeptical frame of mind would free one from these concerns—the reason being, I suspect, that one would cease to think of them (or of anything) as really being bad (or good). In this picture, the natural attitude is the non-skeptical one in which snarling dogs do bother us, and skepticism, to the extent one can achieve it, enables us to transcend our natures. So, skepticism is not worrying, but a release from everyday worries, and there is no suggestion that skepticism itself is a natural attitude; this looks very different from anything one would be likely to find in philosophy today. However, this is an isolated comment, and it would be unwise to try to build much upon it. From now on I shall confine myself to Sextus Empiricus, of whom we have actual writings to consult.

One important difference between Sextus and most contemporary philosophers, implicit in my remarks in the first section, is that Sextus does not take his skepticism to contradict his everyday conduct of life. In one sense this is obvious: since, as we saw, skepticism in the ancient period is not a proposition, but a posture of suspension of judgment, it could not serve as one side of a contradiction. But is there even a broader kind of tension between the skeptical posture and everyday life? Sextus will insist, on the contrary, that his everyday attitudes are perfectly compatible with skepticism; that is the whole point of skepticism being livable. By contrast, almost everyone dealing with skepticism today would say that a skeptical conclusion—such as "we cannot know anything about the external world"—is plainly in conflict with a great many things we take for granted in our everyday lives—such as "I know there was a carton of milk in the refrigerator this morning."

I say "almost everyone" because one strand of thought in contemporary philosophy distinguishes between a "plain" and a "philosophical" way of speaking, and treats "we cannot know anything about the external world," when delivered in the philosophical register, as not genuinely conflicting with a statement such as "I know there was a carton of milk in the refrigerator this morning," delivered in the plain register. (This is most apparent in Clarke 1972.) However, this position is difficult to make sense of, and almost everyone who discusses skepticism nowadays takes it as a *challenge* to a great deal of what we ordinarily believe—which they could not do if they thought plain and philosophical statements simply talked past one another.[6]

Let us come more directly to the issue of naturalness. Whether or not one takes skeptical thinking to be in some way natural, it is surely common ground in modern philosophy to regard our everyday attitudes as natural, even though this point receives rather more explicit attention in Hume than today. And I think there is good evidence that Sextus, too, takes his everyday attitudes to be natural. The way the skeptic can make choices and act, Sextus says, is in light of how things appear, without any commitment to whether they really are as they appear. He singles out four classes of appearances as particularly important, and his comments on these provide a somewhat fuller picture of the skeptic's everyday mindset (*PH* 1.21–4). The first he calls "guidance of nature," and about this he simply says "we are naturally such as to perceive and to think." In the case

of sense-perception, the idea must be that things strike us as red or blue, or as loud, or as pungent, or as sweet, and all this happens through the natural operation of our senses.[7] Presumably something similar applies to thought: the natural operation of our minds leads us to find certain thought-processes intuitive and others the reverse—for example, it goes against the grain to accept both poles of a contradiction, whereas inferring Q from P together with "P, therefore Q," or assuming that the sun will rise tomorrow because it always has before, comes naturally. Large parts of how we react to the world around us, then, are due simply to the way we human beings are. Sextus' second class of appearances is the "necessity of feelings"—things such as hunger, thirst and susceptibility to pleasure and pain; these too account for a great many decisions and actions, and it clearly makes sense to regard them also as natural. And even though the other two—the "handing down of customs and habits" and the "teaching of crafts"—might be classified as cultural rather than natural, their ability to function as they do is no doubt also partly a product of the perceptual and cognitive capacities that he identifies as natural.

All this is no great surprise. More interesting is the question that we have seen to be controversial in the modern period: whether skeptical thinking itself is natural. Sextus never says this in so many words, but his account of how skepticism originates may well suggest an affirmative answer. He tells us that people "of great nature" (*megalophueis, PH* 1.12) were troubled by the difficulty of sorting out what is true about the world and what is false. Their aim was to settle this and thereby be free of worry. But this is not what happens. Instead, they find themselves impressed by disputes between equally powerful opposing positions, and being unable to choose between them, they inevitably suspend judgment—which, it turns out, produces the freedom from worry they were seeking in the first place (*PH* 1.26). As Sextus represents the matter, this is simply the outcome they find themselves led towards, based on the competing considerations and the relative strength—that is, the equal strength—with which these strike them. At least for these people of elevated nature, then, it sounds as if this skeptical result is one to which their natures as unusually active inquirers leads them. Again, unlike those contemporary philosophers who regard skeptical thinking as natural, this is not a source of anxiety—quite the opposite; but as regards the naturalness of skepticism itself, there does not seem to be much separating them and Sextus.[8]

However, this picture of skepticism as a result to which some people are naturally drawn is not consistent in Sextus. For he also famously describes skepticism as an *ability* to generate suspension of judgment through the juxtaposition of opposing considerations on any issue (*PH* 1.8), and it seems clear that this ability is at work in most of his voluminous writings. Maintaining one's skepticism, then, is apparently something that takes active and ongoing effort, as well as a deliberately crafted technique. This is perhaps particularly obvious in the various sets of Modes, which are ready-made devices for producing or maintaining suspension of judgment. So now it looks as if skepticism is not a result that anyone inclined towards inquiry will find natural, but something that needs to be kept up by special procedures. The payoff, of course, is the tranquility [*ataraxia*] that Sextus insists is the accompaniment to suspension of judgment. But this has to be worked at through repeated exercise of the skeptical "ability." If anything, on this picture, it is dogmatism—that is, the commitment to definite views, which Sextus presents as the opposite of skepticism—to which one would be naturally inclined, and the skeptical ability must be deployed to guard against this natural tendency. This perhaps brings us closer to the account suggested by the anecdote about Pyrrho with which I began this section. And of course, any dogmatist or non-skeptic would be happy to accept this, except for the part about the comparative benefits of skepticism.

It is not entirely clear how to reconcile these two accounts: the one in which skepticism is what people "of great nature" are inevitably drawn to because of their inability to choose between competing ideas, and the one in which skepticism is an achievement requiring the exercise of a special "ability." Perhaps the idea is that once suspension of judgment, together with its unexpected byproduct tranquility,[9] has been produced enough times (along the lines of the first account), one comes to see that this suggests a recipe for tranquility—which, to recall, was the original goal—and so (along the lines of the second account) one starts to manufacture devices for reliably generating suspension of judgment. One might wish Sextus had said more to make this clear. But even if I am right about how best to connect the two accounts, there is still a tension between them; one implies that skepticism is natural, at least for a certain kind of person, while the other implies that it comes about through deliberate artifice (which is worth the trouble given the tranquility that ensues).

This ambivalence in Sextus is paralleled by another. In discussing modern philosophy, I have spoken of a simple contrast between philosophical reflection and everyday attitudes. But in the case of Sextus, I have been careful to speak of *his* everyday attitudes, or *the skeptic's* everyday attitudes. The reason is that it is a difficult question whether the everyday attitudes that Sextus attributes to the skeptic are also everyday attitudes that he would attribute to people in general. Sometimes it seems as if Sextus is portraying the skeptic as in tune with ordinary life, with the philosophical dogmatists as the outliers. This is suggested when, as an example of the "handing down of laws and customs," one of the classes of appearances the skeptic follows, he says "we accept being pious as good and being impious as bad *in terms of ordinary life* [*biôtikôs*]" (*PH* 1.24); presumably the contrast is with some theoretical account of the goodness of piety and the badness of its opposite, one confined to philosophers. And it is more explicit in his discussion of signs—that is, observable indications of things that are unobserved—where he declares himself on the side of ordinary life and against philosophical dogmatism (*PH* 2.102, *M* 8.156–8). Some signs are of things not currently observed, but of a kind that have been observed in the past and may be observed in the future (that is, in conjunction with the signs themselves), such as smoke as a sign of fire or a scar as a sign of a previous wound. These he calls "commemorative" signs; they *bring to mind* the things of which they are the signs, although those things are not now observable. And these, he says, both skeptics and ordinary people employ without any suspect intellectual commitments. It is only the kind of sign that purports to discover the underlying nature of things, which cannot ever be directly observed—what he calls the "indicative" sign—that he wishes to oppose; that is an invention of the dogmatists and has no part in our everyday attitudes.[10]

But Sextus does not always identify with the attitudes of ordinary people. Despite having spoken of accepting piety as good "in terms of ordinary life," he says that *ordinary people* (*idiôtai, PH* 1.30) think that certain things are good or bad by nature—a dogmatic position that he studiously avoids. And elsewhere he includes the views of ordinary people among the positions that he places in opposition with a view to suspension of judgment; this is true of the existence and nature of god (*PH* 3.218–19, *M* 9.50) and the existence of motion (*PH* 3.65, *M* 10.45). In the latter case Sextus says that they rely on how things appear; since, as we saw, Sextus also follows appearances for practical purposes, the difference must be that ordinary people take the appearance of motion as showing that there really is such a thing.[11]

The everyday attitudes of a skeptic, then, are not necessarily the same as the attitudes of ordinary non-philosophical people. Sometimes Sextus appears to assimilate the two, but on other occasions he distances himself from the latter. In the case of god, he actually wants to

adopt both stances; while attributing to ordinary people the view that there are gods—a view from which he intends to suspend judgment—he also says that in matters of religion he follows ordinary life and "says that there are gods" (*PH* 3.2, *M* 9.49). It is very hard to see how this combination is possible.[12] In any case, Sextus does not consistently represent the unreflective attitudes of ordinary people as in tune with his own everyday attitudes; sometimes he treats them as embodying dogmatic commitments. And so, if one thinks of the attitudes of ordinary people, before being exposed to philosophy, as *natural* attitudes—as I implicitly did in considering modern philosophy—it will follow that Sextus' own everyday attitudes cannot straightforwardly qualify as natural in that sense, even though he seems to take some trouble to display them as natural *to him*. Of course, this will complicate the conception of naturalness, based on modern philosophers' usage, that I tried to spell out at the beginning, which had to do with the reactions of "any normal person"; for Sextus, it may be that what is unreflectively adopted, or what feels right to adopt upon unpressured reflection, differs from one group to another.

Let me try to sum up this discussion. Those contemporary philosophers who find something natural in the reflections leading to skepticism also hold on to a complex of everyday attitudes that they share with everyone else, which they also take to be natural, and which (with rare exceptions) they take to conflict with skeptical lines of thought. There is thus some sense of a split within human nature, as revealed by these competing (but on this view, equally natural) inclinations; this is articulated most clearly by Thomas Nagel, but seems to be implicit in other philosophers. As a practicing skeptic, Sextus does not have that kind of tension; he takes his skepticism to be quite consistent with a set of everyday attitudes that suffice for the living of a normal life. A good case can be made for saying that he regards these everyday attitudes as natural, at least for himself and those like him. Whether he takes skepticism itself to be natural is less clear; there is reason for thinking that he does take it be natural, at least for those people inclined towards intellectual inquiry, but there is also reason for thinking that he views skepticism as worthwhile and valuable, but *not* something anyone could be expected to arrive at naturally—perhaps even as a salutary antidote to our natural inclination towards dogmatism. Sextus sends similarly mixed signals on the question whether the skeptic's own everyday attitudes are also attitudes that he would attribute to ordinary people; sometimes it sounds as if they are, sometimes not. To the extent that he adopts the second position, it will follow that he regards the everyday attitudes of non-skeptical non-philosophers as incorporating a dogmatic component, and therefore as being at odds with skepticism—whether or not either skepticism or these everyday attitudes qualify as natural.

Finally, we saw that the sense of skepticism as somehow irresistible is often connected in contemporary philosophy with a robust conception of objectivity—the absolute conception of reality, as it has been called; that conception, coupled with the obvious fact that we cannot look at the world except from some perspective, is what makes skepticism seem the only possible outcome. Is there any counterpart to this in the ancient context?

Sextus never mentions anything like the absolute conception of reality; in fact, he never mentions alternative *conceptions* of reality at all.[13] But in effect, I think that his outlook is not so different from this. He finds himself unable to choose among the opposing considerations that he is presented with—or that he has contrived, through his skeptical "ability"—on any given issue. And the reason for this, or one important reason, is that he (like everyone) is a particular person with a particular point of view. This is explicit in the first four of the Ten Modes, which draw attention in various ways to the limitations in individuals' perspectives. But it is implicit in other aspects of his argumentation, such as when he says that someone's claims are not to be trusted because that person is a "part of the

dispute" (e.g., *PH* 3.182, *M* 7.318, 351). Now, if one reason why we have no alternative but to suspend judgment is because of the limitations or the partiality in our perspectives, that suggests that it would only be from a perspective that was no perspective—from a "God's-eye view," as it is sometimes put—that the truth about the world would actually be available to us, which is why dogmatism is doomed to failure. And if so, then something like the absolute conception of reality is in the background of Sextus' skeptical method, even if he does not give it explicit expression. Whether he would say that we—or perhaps just the people "of great nature" who embark on the road leading to skepticism—have a natural aspiration towards this God's-eye view, as have some contemporary philosophers, is another question. Perhaps these people's initial ambition to discover the truth could be understood in those terms. But if so, this is apparently something they get over easily enough, once they find that tranquility can be achieved by suspending judgment rather than by discovery. Again, in Sextus' picture, skepticism does not carry with it any residual anxiety—quite the reverse.

Notes

1 J.L. Mackie, who characterized the claim that "there are no objective values"—an ontological thesis, as he called it (Mackie 1977: 18)—as a form of moral skepticism, is perhaps a partial exception to this trend. But even in his case, the arguments for the claim were in part epistemological: the difficulty of seeing how to settle on one particular moral code as being objectively correct, and the difficulty of understanding what faculty could be capable of discerning objective moral truth.

2 One might say (contrary to the previous paragraph) that this shows ancient skepticism to be epistemological after all; does not an inability to choose between competing positions reflect a *failure to know* the truth of either? (Thanks to Hannah Ginsborg for pressing this question.) But the point remains that considerations concerning the nature of knowledge, justification, etc. need not play any role in getting us to that state, whereas they are central in modern discussions of skepticism.

3 See Schwab's chapter in this volume, "Skeptical Defenses against the 'Inaction' Objection."

4 This is true both of Mackie 1977 and of Sinnott-Armstrong 2006. I have discussed this phenomenon a little further at the opening of Bett 2019.

5 This is a direct riposte to a statement of Quine: "The Humean predicament is the human predicament" (Quine 1969: 72). Quine's project in that essay was to propose a new kind of epistemology that simply ignored skepticism as Hume conceived it and instead investigated, in the spirit of natural science, how we do in fact acquire knowledge. This might seem to point to an attitude like the one we observed as predominant in Hume himself, where our everyday epistemological practices are the natural ones. But his acknowledgement of this "human predicament" suggests that (again, as Hume himself occasionally allowed) the reasoning leading to skepticism is also something unavoidable and natural.

6 I emphasized the rarity of Clarke's position in Bett 1993; this was partly in response to Burnyeat 1997, whose loose talk of the contemporary "insulation" of philosophy from ordinary life made Clarke seem more mainstream than he actually was.

7 See also *M* 8.203 for the same point, again with a reference to nature.

8 It is true that Sextus restricts his claim to a limited class of people. But in practice I think contemporary philosophers would also restrict their claim to people of a philosophical temperament, or the like—even if they might wish to tone down the elitism implicit in Sextus' "of great nature." (See, e.g, Stroud 2011: 3: the metaphysical urge affects "everyone, or at least every reflective person.")

9 Sextus says that tranquility follows suspension of judgment "fortuitously" (*tuchikôs, PH* 1.26, 29). But this cannot mean that it is random or unpredictable, since he also says it follows "as a shadow follows a body" (*PH* 1.29). The point must rather be that it is unexpected the first time, or the first few times, it occurs.

10 For another example, see his opening remarks about number at *PH* 3.151.

11 Everyday experience is also invoked as a guide to how things really are in the case of place, although here the position is not explicitly attributed to ordinary people as opposed to philosophers (*PH* 3.120, 135).
12 I have discussed this in detail in Bett 2015a.
13 This seems to me no accident; it is connected with the near-universal assumption in antiquity of what we would regard as a robust form of realism (which would fit the absolute conception of reality quite nicely). I have discussed this in Bett 2015b, which draws on insights first articulated in Burnyeat 1982.

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STOICISM AND CONTEMPORARY MEDICAL ETHICS

James A. Dunson III

A quarter-century ago, the prominent bioethicist Edmund Pellegrino published a retrospective study of the development of medical ethics over the course of the previous quarter-century. This time-capsule of an article is unique in the way that it succinctly summarizes the "metamorphosis" of an entire field of philosophy, while speculating about its future prospects.

At around the same time that this comprehensive analysis of the history of medical ethics was published, other scholars and laypersons started to focus their attention on the contemporary relevance of Stoicism. These forays into Stoicism reinvigorated this school of thought in academia and demonstrated the power of Stoic thought outside of narrow academic confines. These influential books include Admiral James Stockdale's *Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus' Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior* (1993), Julia Annas' *The Morality of Happiness* (1993), Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (1995), and Lawrence Becker's *A New Stoicism* (1999).

It would be difficult to find two philosophical paradigms that have enjoyed as much recent institutional influence and popular attention as contemporary medical ethics and Stoicism. In the decades following the aforementioned publications, these philosophical orientations have offered academics the chance to rappel from the ivory tower and non-academics the chance to disseminate an accessible version of complicated philosophical views. It is now possible to pursue a PhD in Bioethics, to serve on a hospital ethics committee, and to teach the next generation of doctors in mandatory ethics courses in medical school. Likewise, the popularization of Stoic insights is clear from a cursory glance at a list of best-selling books and popular philosophical websites.[1]

It might come as a surprise, then, that contemporary medical ethics and Stoicism have seldom intersected on their upward trajectory toward academic and popular relevance. After all, the Stoics were actively engaged in debates concerning the philosophy of medicine, even if their Rationalist views are now sometimes remembered only for being foils for Galen's medical insights.[2] They frequently discussed issues that are now subject to heated philosophical and political debate, especially concerning end-of-life dilemmas and the prospect of rational suicide. Most intriguingly, Stoics like Marcus Aurelius sometimes used medical metaphors to describe philosophy itself:

> Doctors keep their scalpels and other instruments handy, for emergencies. Keep your philosophy ready too—ready to understand heaven and earth. In everything you do, even the smallest thing, remember the chain that links them. Nothing earthly succeeds by ignoring heaven, nothing heavenly by ignoring the earth.
>
> (*Med.* 1996: book 3, no. 13)

In this way, conceiving of philosophy as a tool to work on one's self-understanding is reminiscent of both the diagnostic and the curative elements of medicine.[3]

In the discussion that follows, I will offer some reasons why contemporary medical ethics and Stoicism have evolved on parallel philosophical tracks over the past quarter-century. Pellegrino's classification of the different eras of medical ethics will be especially useful here. Then I will suggest how Stoicism could be relevant to medical ethics, in ways that both complement and challenge its dominant presuppositions and methodology. The key insight here is how the Stoics present an alternative understanding of how philosophy is a practical activity, as compared with contemporary medical ethics. This, in turn, entails a different view of individual autonomy. Finally, I will offer a specific example of how these suggestions could have a profound impact: how we conceive of and obtain informed consent in the context of end-of-life dilemmas.

A Very Brief History of Medical Ethics in Four Phases

In his analysis of the development of medical ethics, Pellegrino claims that the Stoics belong in a kind of pre-ethical era that he terms "the quiescent period." He writes:

> I view the metamorphosis in medical ethics as having four somewhat overlapping periods. The first was a long quiescent period in which the Hippocratic tradition, enriched over centuries by contact with the Stoics and with religious traditions, was taken as a given. This was the state of ethics that still existed in 1960 when I first began to teach the subject.
>
> (Pellegrino 1993: 1158)

It might seem strange to hear that everything pre-dating 1960 was part of the same era in medical ethics, but Pellegrino explains that the formation and application of "principle-based moral theories" (in the second period called Principlism) represented something fundamentally different and unique in this timeline. The principles of nonmaleficence, beneficence, autonomy, and justice were later popularized by Beauchamp and Childress in their *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, but they were also consonant with prior moral theories like deontology and utilitarianism. Moreover, two of the principles (nonmaleficence and beneficence) were formalized versions of ideas in the Hippocratic tradition.

The third and fourth periods of medical ethics are termed, respectively, *Antiprinciplism* and a "forthcoming" (as of a quarter-century ago) *Period of Crisis* for the status of moral principles. In the so-called Period of Antiprinciplism, the idea that ethical decision-making could be grounded in principles is attacked from all sides. For instance, some say that these principles require a stronger rational foundation, while others insist that the main error is attempting to discover some rational foundation at all:

> Principles, it is said, are too abstract, too rationalistic, and too removed from the psychological milieu in which moral choices are actually made; principles ignore a person's character, life story, cultural background, and gender. They imply a

> technical perfection in moral decisions that is frustrated by the psychological uniqueness of each moral agent or act.
>
> (Pellegrino 1993: 1160)

These two competing lines of attacks on the power and usefulness of principles are predictable. The principles popularized by Beauchamp and Childress purport to be *prima facie* objective, but also flexible enough to accommodate exceptions and outlier cases. Further, they do not require any metaphysical grounding, since they merely make explicit the prereflective views of ethicists and medical practitioners. Finally, this Principlist approach makes ethical analysis open to empirical investigation in a way that could potentially yield measurable moral progress.[4] However, Principlists expose themselves to attack from every side by claiming sufficient, but not ultimate, grounds. One critic could allege that these principles lack rational justification and sufficient grounding in a unifying moral theory.[5] Others could claim that the Principlist preoccupation with abstract, rational justification obscures, or even ignores, the "psychological uniqueness of each moral agent or act" and discounts relevant gender and cultural differences.

For these reasons, Pellegrino expresses his deep concern for the status of principles in the next phase of the development of medical ethics: the Period of Crisis. He worries that medical ethics requires some novel underpinning, some new foundation, in order to ward off Antiprinciplist challenges. The implication is that, without a new foundation, medical ethics could conceivably regress into another period of quiescence. Under these conditions, ethical authority would be derived solely from the institutional credibility and medical credentials of clinicians. This would be to conflate different forms of expertise and undermine the substantial contribution of philosophical theory to the ethical practice of medicine.

When the problem is framed in this way, it is not obvious how Stoicism helps to advance the cause of contemporary medical ethics. The Stoics did not theorize about ethical dilemmas in medicine in order to generate and apply moral principles; the disputes they engaged in with respect to the philosophy of medicine were largely epistemological, not ethical;[6] their use of medical metaphors was anecdotal and designed to be personally enlightening;[7] finally, the sense of pessimism engendered by their deterministic views might strike modern ethicists and clinicians as defeatist and even damning.

Instead of consigning Stoicism to the quiescent period in the history of medical ethics, it is worth wondering whether contemporary medical ethics developed in such a way as to ignore the potential contributions of such a rich philosophical paradigm. This is not to diminish the importance of moral principles to medicine. But it is to suggest that medical ethics should be understood in a broader and more comprehensive way than perhaps it has been. Doing so would help to inoculate it against the kind of crisis that defenders of moral principles portend.

Reconstructing a Stoic Contribution to Contemporary Medical Ethics

From a Stoic standpoint, the two main questions that could be asked of contemporary medical ethics are as follows: What does it mean for philosophy to be a practical activity, and what implications does the answer to this question have for our understanding of individual autonomy? The answer to the first question is tacitly presupposed by Pellegrino and others, when Principlism is praised for finally bringing some critical scrutiny to the quiescent period. On this view, philosophy is practical when it generates principles that can be applied to a patient dilemma and illuminate what ought to be done. The extent to which one is willing to claim justification for these principles will determine the kind of

rebuttal one must confront. Claim ultimate justification, and be accused of stipulating a standard that begs the question; claim none, and ultimately say nothing at all; claim sufficient but not ultimate justification, and risk being attacked from all angles.

But, for the Stoics, philosophy was a practical activity in quite a different way, when compared with contemporary medical ethics. It was considered a form of spiritual exercise that could help, at least in fits and starts, to overcome the unpleasant emotions caused by giving in to one's impressions. As Cicero puts it,

> Assuredly there is an art of healing the soul—I mean philosophy, whose aid must be sought not, as in bodily diseases, outside ourselves, and we must use our utmost endeavor, with all our resources and strength, *to have the power to be ourselves our own physicians.*
>
> (Cicero *Tusc.*: 3.6)

Becoming one's own physician meant using logical analysis as a tool or weapon to arrive at correct judgments.[8] Crucially, for the Stoics, this required conforming one's own will with a Providentially-ordered universe. But this does not necessarily mean that Stoic ethics is entirely derived from (and only understandable with respect to) this metaphysical scheme.[9]

The key question is whether one deems philosophy to be primarily a third-person activity or a first-person activity. Principlism adopts a third-person perspective, in an attempt to formulate rational standards for resolving ethical dilemmas; on the contrary, the Stoics espouse a first-person standpoint that conceives of philosophy as primarily a form of spiritual exercise. Take, for example, Pellegrino's insight concerning Principlism: it uniquely allowed medical ethics to escape the quiescent period *only* because it prioritized a neutral and disinterested formulation of rules to apply across a wide variety of cases. For the Stoics, on the other hand, philosophy as a practical activity was always a first-person attempt to heal one's own soul by correcting one's own judgments. The potential payoff for such an endeavor was *ataraxia*, defined as imperturbability or tranquility, and attained only by learning to constantly jettison one's false and misleading impressions.

One's ability to discern the difference between rational and irrational modes of behavior is a function of one's capacity to rationally evaluate her choices in light of her own life circumstances. For this reason, the attempt to train one's judgment could require different strategies for different people, at different times and under different conditions. One person might need to use her philosophical tools or weapons to alienate herself from a world that has a grip on her emotions.[10] Stoicism might help someone else to overcome the kind of alienation that results from misunderstanding one's status as a part of a greater whole.[11]

These difference between a third-person and a first-person conception of philosophy as a practical activity has enormous consequences for how one views individual autonomy. In turn, this difference has important implications for how we conceptualize the moral status of patients. If one prefers the third-person understanding of practical philosophy found in much of contemporary medical ethics, then one might view individual autonomy as subject to rational criteria applicable to a wide variety of cases (or even universally, as in the case of Kantian moral philosophy). This view would explicitly endorse the Principlist approach, insofar as it valorizes the contributions of moral philosophy to medicine. It is also consonant with the Principlist desire to develop laws, rules, policies, and procedures applicable to a clinical setting. Those who adopt this view of autonomy must attempt to formulate some criteria for distinguishing between genuinely autonomous choices and heteronomous influences on behavior. Such a standard, applied across a wide variety of cases, would ensure that patients are treated fairly and by the same ethical standards.

Take, for example, the following statement by authors of an influential medical ethics textbook:

> It would beg the question to assume—in an effort to justify paternalistic interventions—that all decisions to end or risk life are irrational … and therefore nonautonomous. But perhaps in the case of those outcomes that are usually considered highly undesirable (e.g. death or severe injury) it should be presumed that the individual's choice is irrational and therefore nonautonomous.
>
> (DeGrazia and Mappes 2011: 50)

Framing the problem in this way avoids the hard question of whether the values of any *particular* patient could legitimize her decision to risk or cause death. This is especially true when the response to these kinds of requests are determined in advance by the rules, policies, and procedures we developed to ensure fair and equal treatment of patients.

A different, and perhaps more urgent, problem with thinking about patient autonomy in a third-person manner is described as follows:

> The traditional autonomy model of decision-making in medicine can be simplistically described as a type of recipe: clinicians contribute the 'facts' (the projected risks and benefits of the available medical options), while patients provide the 'values' (based on their own preferences and ethical commitments).
>
> (Truog, et al. 2015: 15)

This fact-value dichotomy seeped into contemporary medical ethics for obvious reasons: doctors are armed with unique expertise that patients typically lack, while patients are forced to confront threats like acute or chronic pain, radical lifestyle transformations, and even death. For this reason, their preferences and values trump unwanted medical interventions, however beneficent the doctor's intentions might be.

In his book *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*, Atul Gawande discusses this "informative model" of the patient-doctor relationship. He insists that patients do not prefer this model, even though it superficially seems to honor patient autonomy by deferring to patient values: "We want information and control, but we also want guidance" (Gawande 2014: 201). Patient preferences are seldom fully-formed and clearly articulated. Oftentimes, the threats that patients must face appear out of nowhere, so that they have no time to philosophize about their competing beliefs and values.

Further, patients sometimes face what has been called a Devil's Choice: this phrase serves as "a metaphor to describe medical choices that arise in circumstances where all the available options are both unwanted and perverse" (Magnusson 2006: 564). This is not to imply that any decisions we could make would all be equally wrong. Instead, it means that no overarching principle could provide us with a single morally sanctioned outcome. For these reasons, a doctor must help to elicit and articulate patient preferences, to a greater or lesser degree based on the particular patient.

The gap between patient and doctor expertise often means that doctors implicitly influence patient decision making, *even if* they explicitly attempt to avoid doing so. The relevant treatment options are, of course, framed by the doctor; the verbal and nonverbal ways in which doctors present these options can have profound effects on patient decision-making.[12] Doctors, being human themselves, are not always sufficiently aware of their own beliefs and biases, which may be colored by modern medicine's view of mortality itself as a treatable condition.

The limits of the traditional approach to patient autonomy can be mitigated by what has been called the "microethical" approach:

> We might characterize the traditional approach as 'the view from the outside' and the microethical approach as 'the view from the inside.' The view from the outside has the advantage of being accessible through theoretical analysis, generalizable, and consistent across cases. The view from the inside, the microethical view, is unique to each situation, arises spontaneously at a particular moment in time, and is created in the relational space between the participants. It is inextricably connected to the verbal and nonverbal ways in which we communicate, and it is directly applicable to the front lines of practice.
>
> (Truog et al. 2015: 12)

In order for the microethical approach to be effective, doctors and patients both need to be Stoic enough to explicitly formulate and rationally evaluate their beliefs and biases. Moreover, they have to be both absolutely invested in understanding the unique set of circumstances that they jointly confront and willing to aim at these goals together, in spite of the inherent imbalances in expertise and the relative weight of their individual values.

All of this might seem reminiscent of Antiprinciplist objectives, in the rejection of a third-person Principlist standpoint (or the "view from the outside"). However, the Antiprinciplist affirmation of the "psychological uniqueness of each moral agent or act" ends up being just as abstract as Principlism: if one rejects ethical principles in favor of the idiosyncrasies of personal psychology, or cultural or gender affiliation, then one reduces individuals to some supposedly basic fact about their moral character, instead of understanding them in all their complexity.

On the contrary, if one endorses the Stoic idea that philosophy is primarily a first-person activity, then one will develop an understanding of autonomy that is personal without being relativistic. One will resist the temptation to theorize abstractly about specific patient dilemmas. But one will also refuse to endorse the Antiprinciplist view that ethical decision-making is either idiosyncratic or explicable solely in terms of some supposedly crucial fact about one's identity. Lawrence Becker eloquently describes the sense in which the Stoics are "particularists without being relativists":

> Stoics are particularists about moral decision-making. That means two things. First, stoics (sic) expect to be able to construct concrete normative advice about many of the details of how a given person should act in a given situation. Stoic ethical theory is aimed quite directly at actual practice, not merely at constructing sets of general principles. But second, stoics do *not* expect to be able to deal with moral cases *a priori*. The details will always depend on who the people involved are (in terms of their character, ability, knowledge, limitations) and what their physical and social circumstances are. This does not mean that stoics are moral relativists. Surgeons, after all, are not considered epistemological relativists when they operate in terms of the nonstandard anatomy they see before them on the table rather than in terms of the normative expectations they acquired in the course of their medical education and practice. In a similar way, stoics are particularists without being relativists in the moral judgments they make about particular cases.
>
> (Becker 2003: 229)

None of this is to suggest that questions of fairness and uniformity of treatment are unimportant. However, the shift from a Stoic conception of autonomy to a more contemporary, Kantian-inspired view omits one of the most important features of Stoicism: the need to rationally train one's emotions. If philosophy is understood as a first-person activity, then the extent to which one's preferences are rational depends upon one's particular circumstances and one's ability to critically evaluate them. There are no *a priori* moral shortcuts to distinguish between authentic choices and heteronomous preferences. The entire point of Stoic spiritual exercise is to inculcate the kinds of habits that make self-knowledge possible. Compare this to the Kantian model of autonomy, which claims to prize self-knowledge but ultimately seems to render it impossible.[13]

This goal of Stoic rational training is sometimes viewed as a pernicious form of fatalism: if the goal of spiritual exercise is to merely accommodate oneself to a deterministic universe, then in what sense does it ultimately achieve any real value? If properly trained emotions provide us insight into a ubiquitous and uncontrollable causal chain that is indifferent to human preferences, then what exactly is the point? On this view, Stoic *ataraxia* seems to be an insufficient reward for all the effort. Further, the determinism and the imperturbability so central to Stoic thought seem to run counter to the technological progress and optimism that is presupposed in many debates in contemporary medical ethics.

However, the result of this first-person Stoic approach is better described as being "at home in the world" in a way that would seem unrecognizable to anyone steeped in Kantian moral thought. Patients and doctors both need to critically evaluate their own beliefs and biases, in an effort to properly situate their own emotions in the context of the important decisions they must make. The imperturbability that may result is better described as reconciliation, rather than resignation or consolation. Michael Hardimon draws the distinction between reconciliation and consolation as follows:

> Consolation involves essentially coming to terms with the failure of satisfaction of expectations that one *still* regards as reasonable (i.e., even after one has found consolation). Attaining reconciliation, on the other hand, turns on freeing oneself of expectations that one has justifiably come to regard as unreasonable.
>
> (Hardimon 1994: 89)

Reconciliation, then, involves a kind of self-transformation, where one achieves a new understanding that frees oneself from false impressions. This new freedom potentially results in the kind of imperturbability that the Stoics prized.

Freeing oneself from unreasonable expectations seems perniciously fatalistic only if one secretly continues to deem those expectations to be reasonable. Take, for example, Epictetus' seemingly harsh advice on the proper attitude toward loved ones:

> With regard to whatever objects give you delight, are useful, or are deeply loved, remember to tell yourself of what general nature they are, beginning from the most insignificant things. If, for example, you are fond of a specific ceramic cup, remind yourself that it is only ceramic cups in general of which you are fond. Then, if it breaks, you will not be disturbed. If you kiss your child, or your wife, say that you only kiss things which are human, and thus you will not be disturbed if either of them dies.
>
> (*Ench.* 3)

While it might shock the senses to hear that one's dead son is like a broken cup, that is precisely what is required to break the spell of habituation. Being seduced by irrational

beliefs concerning human immortality actually harms our ability to be present in each moment. Becoming reconciled with what is inevitable constitutes both a more truthful and a more genuinely happy way of living. As Seneca puts it, "Snatch the pleasures your children bring, let your children in turn find delight in you, and drain joy to the dregs without delay" (*Letter to Marcia* 10.4). This remark is meaningful and even wise in the exact same way as Epictetus' injunction; the only difference is the way in which their advice is framed, so as to be effectively communicated to each particular reader.

As we have seen, Stoicism provides a divergent and even competing conception of philosophy as a practical activity, when compared with contemporary medical ethics. Their mutual, but largely non-overlapping, rise to prominence and even popularity depended upon quite different philosophical methodologies. Stoicism prescribes a first-person or microethical understanding of individual autonomy, as well as an increased emphasis on the need for both patients and doctors to engage in a project of self-knowledge. Further, Stoicism requires that doctors help to elicit, interpret, and articulate patient values, rather than defer to an "informative" model of the patient-doctor relationship that only superficially respects patient autonomy. Patient values do not always come fully-formed and cogently communicated; they may need to emerge in the course of a rational conversation, where both interlocutors are mindful of their beliefs and biases. In this way, the Stoic model helps to overcome the inherent limitations in both Principlism and Antiprinciplism: it is particularistic without being relativistic. Finally, the moral psychological attitudes engendered by practicing philosophy in this way are better described as reconciling, rather than consoling or perniciously fatalistic.

Stoicism and End-of-Life Dilemmas

Perhaps the most compelling example of how Stoicism could complement contemporary medical ethics concerns the value of informed consent and how it is obtained at the end of life. Informed consent might be described as a further and more robust articulation of the principle of autonomy, but it takes on even more of the "view from inside" concerning patient values. Patients have an absolute right to refuse medical interventions that fail to comport with their values. What patients are permitted to request of doctors depends upon what is medically required, what is recognized as legally and ethically permissible, and what they themselves view as being most consonant with their beliefs and values. Stoicism describes these choices in ways that are important for patients and doctors to consider. In his article "A New Stoic: The Wise Patient," Williams Stempsey writes:

> Most people immediately seek relief from illness. The Stoic, when faced with illness, sees an opportunity to make a choice about seeking relief. The proper choice is the one that is in accord with nature—what fate has ordained for the individual. The ability to know such things is wisdom.
>
> (Stempsey 2004: 466)

It is in the context of end-of-life debates that Stoic insights concerning informed consent have the most traction and are most urgently needed, given the way in which debates over physician-assisted death have been framed in countries like the United States. For instance, arguments over the role that doctors can play in the death of a patient have often turned on whether or not patients have a "right to die." Moreover, how one evaluates these debates often depends upon whether physician-assisted death could count as "death with dignity." But these ways of putting the question assume a third-person perspective, a view from the outside, on a most first-person inquiry: how one should confront one's own mortality.

Framing the debate in this way not only misunderstands the stakes for patients, but it also largely fails to persuade people to change their views on whether there is a right to die or whether such a death could be dignified. For example, Kant deemed suicide to be categorically impermissible and absolutely undignified, whereas supporters of physician-assisted death point out that self-administering a fatal dose of barbiturates amongst family and friends is infinitely more dignified than withering away. Adopting a utilitarian concern for how we manage medical and financial resources at the end of life leads to the exact same argumentative impasse: either we must care for patients regardless of what it costs (provided that they wish to continue treatment), or we are being utterly irresponsible for failing to curtail massive end-of-life expenditures.

The question of whether and when a doctor should assist in a patient's death calls out for the kind of microethical approach articulated earlier by Truog, et al. Here the Stoics can help:

> The primary issue for stoic theory and stoic medical practice is whether the dying person can be sustained as an active, effective rational agent. The answer to that question will always be person-specific, and will depend as much on that person's psychological set up and social circumstances as on his or her medical condition.
>
> (Becker 2003: 232)

This first-person, microethical, Stoic view would have much to offer concerning the debate over how to define death (i.e. whether one prefers a whole-brain or a higher-brain criterion). If you accept the higher-brain definition, then a permanent loss of consciousness would count as sufficient for a person to die, whether or not the involuntary responses of the body were still evident. It also has massive implications for how we discuss the concept of physician-assisted death. For Stoicism, moral reasoning is a species of practical reasoning, a process of context-based rational discernment. What should be at the forefront of these debates is not some abstract proposition concerning a right to die, or whether such a death could be dignified. Rather, we should pay attention to the actual condition of actual patients who find themselves caught in a Stoic dilemma: being terminally ill and sufficiently conscious of that fact.

These patients may exercise their right to refuse treatment, but in the vast majority of states in the U.S. they have no recourse to request anything that will directly cause their death. If their pain becomes intractable and unbearable, then it is both legally and ethically permissible to continuously sedate the patient into unconsciousness before the organism has perished. The American Medical Association explicitly endorsed this outcome a decade ago:

> The duty to relieve pain and suffering is central to the physician's role as healer and is an obligation that physicians have to their patients. When a terminally ill patient experiences severe pain or other distressing clinical symptoms that do not respond to aggressive, symptom-specific palliation, it can be appropriate to offer sedation to unconsciousness as an intervention of last resort.
>
> (American Medical Association 2008: 5.6)

However, it is difficult to think of this as a medical intervention, when the patient does not survive the cure. The permanent loss of consciousness is the only death that the patient will ever actually experience. Crucially, this is perhaps the only intervention that does not require informed consent: the patient, having no prior option to request anything to end her life, has been compelled to live past the point of meaningfully participating in decisions concerning her death.

For these reasons, physician-assisted death could be regarded as an option for specific patients who view continuous sedation as being inconsistent with their values. After being diagnosed with a terminal illness and with fewer than six months to live, they could have a Stoic conversation with doctors, who would then help to elicit and coherently articulate their values. Then the patient could choose to obtain a fatal dose of barbiturates to self-administer when they wish, or they could positively consent (for the very first time) to the prospect of continuous sedation down the road.

All of this would require moving past the Kantian view that suicide is inherently and absolutely immoral, as well as the assumption that any moral rule we put in place must hold categorically. For the Stoics, one person's decision to end her life does not entail that others should do the same. As we have seen, the Stoics are "particularists without being relativists"; their insights are intended to have profound personal consequences for those with the discipline to engage in spiritual exercise; and the tranquility that may result is better described as an honest reconciliation with reality, rather than a nihilistic resignation.

In his letter "On Old Age," the Stoic Seneca writes,

> Let us cherish and love old age; for it is full of pleasure if one knows how to use it. Fruits are most welcome when almost over; youth is most charming at its close. … Each pleasure reserves to the end the greatest delights that it contains. Life is most delightful when it is on the downward slope, but has not yet reached the abrupt decline.
>
> (Seneca 1917: XII)

Perhaps the Stoics could help medical ethicists, doctors, and patients alike to better understand the pleasures and pains of each of these phases of life.

Notes

1 See especially William Irvine's *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (2008), Ryan Holiday's *The Obstacle is the Way: The Timeless Art of Turning Trials into Triumph* (2014), and modernstoicism.com

2 As Michael Frede writes, "Rationalism, Empiricism, and Methodism were the major positions adopted by Hellenistic doctors. Yet Galen, in the second half of the second century A.D., found none of them acceptable. He took the position that experience did suffice to gain knowledge which would make one a competent doctor. But he also thought that if the practical knowledge of the doctor was to be complete, if he was to know all that was practically relevant, he also had to master the theory of medicine" (Frede 1987: 237). Whether or not this is a fair way of framing debates in ancient medicine is the subject of some dispute. See especially Gill 2007.

3 Epictetus employs medical imagery in a different way when he writes, "Sickness is a hindrance to the body, but not to your ability to choose, unless that is your choice. Lameness is a hindrance to the leg, but not to your ability to choose. Say this to yourself with regard to everything that happens, then you will see such obstacles as hindrances to something else, but not to yourself" (*Ench.* 9).

4 See Page 2012.

5 See Clouser and Gert 1990.

6 Chief among these was whether the heart or the brain was properly described as the seat of intelligence.

7 This is not to deny that a personally efficacious philosophical tool could also perhaps work for others. However, for all of its grand systematizing, Stoicism is remarkable for its first-person focus and its literary qualities.

8 Marcus Aurelius writes, "Nothing is so conducive to spiritual growth as the capacity for logical and accurate analysis of everything that happens to us. To look at it in such a way that we understand what need it fulfills, and in what kind of world" (*Med.* book 3, no. 10).

9 Julia Annas, for instance, rejects the common assumption that Stoic ethics is inextricably bound to Stoic theories of physics (e.g. pneuma) and metaphysics (the logos). She writes, "The ethical part of philosophy is the study of certain topics such as impulse, virtue, emotion, the sage and so on. These topics are not defined in terms of or derived from pneuma and matter, or Providence. They have to be defined and discussed in their own terms. This is not a point which needs argument but just an aspect of the fact that ethics is a distinct part of philosophy with its own distinct subject matter" (Annas 2007: 67).

10 The Stoic idea of the "inner citadel" is an appropriate metaphor for the value of turning inward and alienating oneself from the corrupting influences of the world as it is perceived.

11 Marcus Aurelius writes, "The world as a living being—one nature, one soul. Keep that in mind. And how everything feeds into that single experience, moves with a single motion. And how everything helps produce everything else. Spun and woven together" (*Med.* book 4, no. 40).

12 Physicians as examining their own biases (medical biases) and emotions. "It also compels clinicians to develop greater awareness of the ways in which their own biases and ethical proclivities shape how they guide patients in making decisions. Sometimes clinicians are conscious of how they frame certain choices, but most often these biases are expressed unconsciously" (Truog, et al. 2015: 14).

13 In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes, "Moral cognition of oneself, which seeks to penetrate into the depths (the abyss) of one's heart which are quite difficult to fathom, is the beginning of all human wisdom. For in the case of a human being, the ultimate wisdom, which consists in the harmony of a being's will with its final end, requires him first to remove the obstacle within (an evil will actually present in him) and then to develop the original predisposition to a good will within him, which can never be lost" (Kant 1996: 6:441). Only a few sections later, however, we learn that what was 'quite difficult to fathom' is really 'unfathomable:' "The depths of the human heart are unfathomable. Who knows himself well enough to say, when he feels the incentive to fulfill his duty, whether it proceeds entirely from the representation of the law or whether there are not many other sensible impulses contributing to it that look to one's advantage (or to avoiding what is detrimental) and that, in other circumstances, could just as well serve vice?" (Kant 1996: 6:447).

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31

STOIC THERAPY FOR TODAY'S TROUBLES

Massimo Pigliucci

Introduction: Nothing to Do With Stiff Upper Lips

Why would anyone want to resurrect ancient Stoicism as a way to tackle today's troubles? Isn't it all about going through life with a stiff upper lip while doing one's best to suppress emotions? It may have been good for Roman legionnaires, but hardly suitable to the uber-technologic society of the twenty-first century, with its fast-paced life, recurring economic upheavals, and possible environmental catastrophe.

Also, wasn't Stoicism a man's thing? After all, the very Latin root of that crucial word, "virtue" [*vir*] means "man." And we know that women in ancient Roman and Greek societies were confined to very restrictive roles, not really citizens in any meaningful way of the word. How is that going to square after three waves of feminism, the #metoo (fourth wave) movement, and the increasing, if still painfully slow, undoing of the patriarchy?

You'd be surprised. While there certainly is a component of endurance in Stoicism, the idea is not to suppress, but to redirect our emotions: away from destructive ones like anger, fear, and hatred, and toward constructive ones, like love, joy, and a serene sense of justice. We may carry around smartphones and fly across continents, but Seneca was complaining about the same sort of things we are bothered by today: crowds, noise, and bad politicians. The specific circumstances have changed, but human nature has not.[1] We still want the same things (love, serenity, meaning), and still make the same mistakes (overvaluing externals like wealth and fame).

And yes, *vir* means man, but it is the Latin translation of the Greek *aretē*, which means excellence. And excellence, moral or otherwise, can be achieved by individuals of any gender. The ancient Stoics were obviously not feminist in the modern sense of the term (Aikin and Mc-Gill-Rutherford 2014), but they were surprisingly ahead of their time:

> I know what you will say, "You quote men as examples: you forget that it is a woman that you are trying to console." Yet who would say that nature has dealt grudgingly with the minds of women, and stunted their virtues? Believe me, they have the same intellectual power as men, and the same capacity for honourable and generous action.
>
> (Seneca, *To Marcia, On Consolation,* XVI)

Indeed, Stoic philosophy is not just about self-reliance and self-improvement—although it certainly is about that too. It has tools that allow us to deal with issues of justice and fairness, as well as a cosmopolitan outlook that is still, depressingly, alien to much of modern political thinking, even of a progressive bent.

In this chapter we will begin to explore Stoic practical philosophy by examining what I consider to be the two theoretical pillars of Stoicism: the notion of "living according to nature" and what modern Stoics call the dichotomy of control. We will then see how the Stoic cardinal virtues can function as a compass for the eudaimonic life, the life worth living. We will tackle the practice of how to live such a life by way of Epictetus' three disciplines of desire/aversion, action, and assent, as well as his role ethics. I will provide the reader with a sample of Stoic spiritual exercises meant to improve our life, and end with some general considerations about why Stoicism is in fact a very practical philosophy for the twenty-first century and beyond.

The Two Pillars of Stoicism: Live According to Nature and the Dichotomy of Control

It is hard to distill a tradition that spanned five centuries in antiquity, and that has influenced Western culture ever since, into a few words, particularly because Stoicism was always characterized by vibrant discussions, both internal and in dialogue with other philosophical schools. Nonetheless, I think the two fundamental pillars of Stoic philosophy are the notion of living "according to nature" and the so-called dichotomy of control.

Both of them are paradoxical notions, in the original sense of the word: *para doxan*, meaning uncommon opinions. The Stoics were so famous for putting forth such counterintuitive ideas that Cicero wrote a whole treatise on Stoic Paradoxes.[2] Often one gets the feeling that Stoic philosophers came up with these short summaries just to rise people's curiosity and engage them in more than the ancient equivalent of an elevator speech.

Be that as it may, the idea of living according to nature is summarized by Diogenes Laertius (2018, VII.87–89):

> Zeno, in his work *On Human Nature*, said that the goal is to live in harmony with nature, which means to live according to virtue; for nature leads us to virtue. Likewise Cleanthes in his work *On Pleasure* and Posidonius and Hecaton in their works *On Goals*. Again, to live according to virtue is equivalent to living according to the experience of natural events, as Chrysippus says in the first book of his work *On Goals*. For our natures are parts of the nature of the universe.… And this very thing constitutes the virtue and smooth current of the happy life.… Thus Diogenes explicitly states that the goal is to act rationally in the selection of that which accords with nature, while Archedemus says that the goal is to live in the performance of all one's duties. The nature according to which one should live Chrysippus takes to be both universal nature and, in particular, human nature. Cleanthes, however, holds that it is only the universal nature that should be followed, and not that of the particular.

To begin with, notice here the sort of internal disagreement—for instance between Cleanthes and Chrysippus, the second and third heads of the Stoa, respectively—in the last few lines. More broadly, the concept is to be understood in the context of ancient Stoic pantheism. For the Stoics, the universe was a living organism endowed with a capacity for reason, the *logos*. We are literally bits and pieces of this "god," and our happiness depends on living "according" to or "in harmony with" the *logos*.

Few people today would subscribe to a pantheist view of the cosmos, but the basic notion can be retrieved without loss, according to modern Stoics like Lawrence Becker (2017). Living according to nature means—in a sense following Chrysippus over Cleanthes—to take seriously what sort of biological organisms human beings are. Our species is characterized fundamentally by two attributes: our inherent sociality and our ability to reason. Although we can survive in isolation, if need be, we thrive only in highly connected social networks. And although other species certainly have a capacity to reason, *Homo sapiens* has developed it to a far larger extent than any other living organism. It is therefore a small leap to go from these considerations to the concept that living according to nature, which is the same as living virtuously, means to use one's reason to improve the human cosmopolis. In fact, Marcus Aurelius pretty much says so explicitly, in three crucial passages of the *Meditations*:

> If the intellectual is common to all men, so is reason, in respect of which we are rational beings: if this is so, common also is the reason that commands us what to do, and what not to do; if this is so, there is a common law also; if this is so, we are fellow-citizens; if this is so, we are members of some political community.
>
> (*Med.* IV.4)

> Do you have reason? I have. Why then do you not use it?
>
> (*Med.* IV.13)

> Do what is necessary, and whatever the reason of a social animal naturally requires, and as it requires.
>
> (*Med.* IV.24)

This idea that there is a connection between who we are and what we ought to do in order to live a life worth living, a eudaimonic life, was actually common to Greco-Roman philosophy, and has, unfortunately, been lost in modern times (Hadot 1995). It also neatly side-steps the infamous "is/ought" problem raised by David Hume,[3] as any naturalistic philosophy should be able to do.

The second pillar of Stoic philosophy is, in a sense, a consequence of the first one. Nowadays known as the dichotomy of control, it was (like the idea of living according to nature) part of Stoic philosophy since the very beginning. Its most famous rendition, though, is from the late Stoic Epictetus:

> Some things are within our power, while others are not. Within our power are opinion, motivation, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever is of our own doing; not within our power are our body, our property, reputation, office, and, in a word, whatever is not of our own doing.
>
> (*Ench.* 1.1)

Epictetus goes on to explain the considerable benefits of sticking with the dichotomy:

> If you have the right idea about what really belongs to you and what does not, you will never be subject to force or hindrance, you will never blame or criticize anyone, and everything you do will be done willingly.
>
> (*Ench.* 1.3)

This is another "paradoxical" notion, since Epictetus seems to be telling us that we don't have control of anything other than our opinions and values. But surely modern cognitive science contradicts the bit about opinions and values (since they can be influenced by others, sometimes in ways we are not aware of), and commonsense outright rejects the bit about not having control over our body, property, reputation, office and the like (since we can obviously influence all those things through our efforts).

In fact, the dichotomy of control poses no threat to commonsense, and in turn is not threatened by research in modern cognitive science, once properly understood. It is certainly the case that other people can affect our value judgments and opinions, sometimes in ways that we may not be aware of. But, ultimately, the buck stops with us, meaning that if we willingly endorse a given notion (e.g., racism is a morally good attitude) it is we who are responsible for that "assent" (as the Stoics call it). Conversely, while it is certainly the case that we can do things to take care of our body, reputation and so forth, it is equally true that accidents and other things outside our control can severely interfere. That is, in those realms, the buck does *not* stop with us.

The way modern Stoics cash this out is by talking about shifting our goals from outcomes to efforts. Let's say that I'm up for a job interview tomorrow morning. From a Stoic perspective I should focus on what is under my control, including preparing the best resume I can muster, rehearse the interview ahead of time, and generally do everything in my power to perform well at the interview. But the final outcome, whether I do or do not get the job, is going to depend (also) on external circumstances that are entirely outside of my control, like who's going to interview me, in what mood he's going to be, or what my competition for the job will be. The Stoic attitude toward outcomes, then, is to cultivate equanimity, which the Oxford English dictionary defines as "mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation," following up the definition with a picture that is quintessentially Stoic: "she accepted both the good and the bad with equanimity."

We can now make sense of the second quote above from Epictetus: if we truly do manage to concern ourselves with "what belongs to us" (i.e., what is in our control) and develop an attitude of equanimity toward the things that do not belong to us (i.e., are outside our control), we will live a life of serenity in the course of which we will have no reason to complain about others, nor will we ever find ourselves forced to do things that we have not actually assented to.[4]

The Stoic Moral Compass: The Four Virtues

This is all good and well, in theory. But how do Stoics actually put any of it into practice? The rest of this chapter is devoted to answering that question, by four different means: an overview of the four cardinal virtues, a discussion of Epictetus' three disciplines, an analysis of Epictetus' role ethics, and a sampler of actual spiritual exercises (to use Pierre Hadot's 1995 famous phrase).

The Stoics recognized four cardinal virtues that can be used as a sort of moral compass to navigate life: prudence (or practical wisdom), courage, justice, and temperance. A full-fledged analysis of the Stoic system reveals that these can in turn be thought of as four classes, each comprised of a number of sub-virtues (Sharpe 2014), but the more complex taxonomy is both outside the scope of this essay and not particularly relevant from a pragmatic point of view.

Prudence, or practical wisdom [*phronēsis*] for the Stoics is the knowledge of what is good or bad for us. In Stoic philosophy, because of the dichotomy of control, this reduces

"simply" to the realization that the only things truly good for us are our own good judgments (virtue being nothing but right reason), and the only things truly bad for us are our own bad judgments. I put "simply" in scare quotes because it is one thing to understand this at a cognitive level; it is entirely another thing to put it into practice every day.

Courage has little to do with the physical variety, and nothing to do with the notion of rushing into dangerous situations. Rather, it has an inherent moral component, and should be understood as the courage to stand up and do the right thing. But what is the right thing to do, in any given circumstance? That's the business of the virtue of justice, which deals with how to interact fairly with other people. Finally, temperance has to do with both self-control and with acting in the world in a way that is proportional to the circumstances, neither over-reacting nor under-reacting.

The Stoic goes through her day by keeping these four virtues in mind, so that every time she has to make a decision about potential action, she can navigate the situation by asking herself whether what she is about to do is prudent, courageous, just, and temperate. For instance, let's say that I witness my boss harassing a co-worker. Should I intervene, even at the risk of being reprimanded by my boss, and perhaps be fired? Yes. Prudence tells me that this is the right judgment, because if I don't act it is my own character that will be negatively affected. It is just for me to stand up to my boss because by doing so I act fairly toward my co-worker. It is courageous to do it, because I am risking personal consequences. And it is temperate to stand firm and politely explain to my boss why he is overstepping his boundaries, not to barely whisper my objection (under-reaction) or to punch him in the nose (over-reaction).

Of course, one might reasonably ask, why focus on these particular virtues, as distinct from other possible ones? There are two answers on offer. On the one hand, the Stoic framework is useful for certain people, but other frameworks may be equally useful, or more useful for other people. No claim is being made here that the Stoic approach is *the* way to go. It is just *a* way to go. On the other hand, there is some preliminary research at the cross-cultural level that shows that, despite a significant amount of variance, something like the four Stoic virtues is found in pretty much every literate culture in the world (Dahlsgaard et al. 2005).

Living a Good Life: The Three Disciplines of Epictetus

A different, if complementary, framework to live a eudaimonic life in the Stoic sense centers on Epictetus' famous three disciplines, as explained in detail in Hadot (2001). The three disciplines are: desire and aversion, action, and assent. Epictetus himself does not explicitly use these terms, but clearly spells out the disciplines in a famous passage of the *Discourses*:

> There are three departments in which a man who is to be good and noble must be trained. The first concerns the will to get and will to avoid; he must be trained not to fail to get what he wills to get nor fall into what he wills to avoid. The second is concerned with impulse to act and not to act, and, in a word, the sphere of what is fitting: that we should act in order, with due consideration, and with proper care. The object of the third is that we may not be deceived, and may not judge at random, and generally it is concerned with assent.
>
> (*Diss.* III, 2)

In modern parlance, the discipline of desire and aversion teaches us what is proper for us to desire and to stay away from. While people normally desire external things, like wealth,

fame, and so forth, Stoics train themselves to desire only what is within their control, namely their own good judgments. Conversely, it is common to have aversion to certain externals, like poverty or lack of recognition. Again, Stoics train themselves to be averse only to things under their control, that is, their own bad judgments. It should be immediately added—to avoid a common misconception—that this doesn't mean that Stoics don't value externals. They are, in fact, categorized as preferred or dispreferred "indifferents," meaning that they have value (*axia*), but not moral valence. To put it simply, being wealthy (or poor) or famous (or unknown) does not make you a good (or bad) person: "The following are non-sequiturs: 'I am richer, therefore superior to you'; or 'I am a better speaker, therefore a better person, than you'" (*Ench.* 44).

The discipline of action is concerned with how we act toward other people, which should be with fairness and justice, always respecting others because they have intrinsic dignity as human beings, sharing—like us—in the *logos*, that is, the ability to think rationally. Several modern Stoics have expanded this notion to the idea that we should treat all sentient beings on the planet with fairness and justice, taking a clue from Jeremy Bentham,[5] who famously said that "The question is not, 'Can they reason?' nor, 'Can they talk?' but 'Can they suffer?'"

The third discipline, that of assent, teaches us to slow down, so to speak, before arriving at a judgment, taking our time to consider whether a given "impression" (say, that another person is sexually attractive and *therefore* we should try to sleep with them regardless of other considerations) is warranted or not. Epictetus puts the point vividly in the *Enchiridion*:

> So make a practice at once of saying to every strong impression: "An impression is all you are, not the source of the impression." Then test and assess it with your criteria, but one primarily: ask, "Is this something that is, or is not, in my control?" (*Ench.* 1.5)

There is some debate, summarized by Hadot (2001: ch. 5) as to the sequence in which the three disciplines should be studied and implemented. I am convinced by Hadot's point: the clear sequence assigned to the disciplines by Epictetus (quote above, *Diss.* III, 2)—that is: desire & aversion > action > assent—is useful during a course of study. But lived Stoic ethics blends the three continuously, in every conceivable practical application. One cannot act well (second discipline) if one does not have a notion of which impressions to reject or assent to (third discipline), and both of these rely on at least some understanding of what is good for us to desire or avoid (first discipline).

So just like a practicing Stoic might choose the four cardinal virtues as her compass to navigate everyday situations, she might instead opt for a constant practice of the three disciplines. It is notable that Epictetus hardly talks about the virtues, which are far more prominent in Seneca, and that Seneca does not mention the disciplines, which appear to be one of Epictetus' own original contributions to Stoicism. There is more than one way to be a Stoic.

Living a Good Life: The Role Ethics of Epictetus

Another of Epictetus' original contributions to Stoic philosophy is his so-called role ethics, studied in detail by Johnson (2013). According to Epictetus, we play three classes of roles in life: i) as members of the human cosmopolis, the family of all human beings; ii) roles we have been assigned by the circumstances, like being someone's son or daughter; and iii) roles we have chosen for ourselves (like being a father or mother, a friend, or a colleague).

The first role is the most important, and we should never do anything that undermines the welfare of the cosmopolis. In practical terms, this means that we should treat

everyone, including strangers, justly, with fairness. And if we happen to have more influence or power (say, because we are a politician or a wealthy person), then we have an extra duty to do our part. As Spider-Man famously said, with great power (or money) comes great responsibility.

The other roles need to be juggled in the best way afforded by the circumstances, according to our own individual judgments of priorities, trade-offs, and so forth. This may sound rather vague and unsatisfactory, especially compared to, say, the apparently precise suggestions of modern utilitarian calculus. But virtue ethicists in general, and Stoics in particular, realize that the precision afforded by other approaches is actually illusory. Life is far too complicated, with too many variables and too many unforeseen consequences, for universal rules to apply. That is why, incidentally, utilitarians rely so often on highly artificial thought experiments where all the messiness of the world is excluded or controlled for, like the infamous trolley dilemmas (Foot 1967).[6]

Epictetus, while respecting the complexity of individual situations, does provide some guidance for how to deploy role ethics, particularly in the following passage in the *Discourses*:

> Reflect on the other social roles you play…. If you are young, what does being young mean, if you are old, what does age imply, if you are a father, what does fatherhood entail? Each of our titles suggests the acts appropriate to it.
>
> (*Diss.* II, 10.10)

The quote reminds us that each role comes with a label, and that label implies certain duties and ways of doing things. This doesn't mean that there is, say, only one way of being a father, or son, or friend. But fathers have certain duties (toward their children), and the very conception of the role of father carries certain indications on what to do and not to do.

In fact, Epictetus deals with the case of a father who is distraught because his daughter is sick. He can no longer take the emotional pain and leaves the house, asking his wife to keep caring for the child. Epictetus listens to the story and comments: "Well then, do you think you were right to have acted in that way?—'I was behaving naturally,' he said" (*Diss.* I.11). The father was behaving naturally, but not justly. He was not owning up to the duties of a father, as we readers surely understand.

That said, what matters for Stoics is to do one's best, and not everyone is capable of the same sort of feats. In another story, Epictetus is asked what he thinks of two senators who opposed the tyranny of the emperor. One of them is willing to speak up, risking his life. The other is concerned for the safety of his family. Epictetus does not praise the first and condemn the second, but simply reminds his students that: "You are the one that knows yourself, of how much you are worth to yourself and for how much you are selling yourself.… Consider at what price you sell your integrity; but please, for God's sake, don't sell it cheap" (*Diss.* I, 2.11,33).

Speaking of roles, the Stoics insisted that a major way to learn how to live a eudaimonic life is to keep in mind role models. Seneca explains how and why:

> Choose therefore a Cato; or, if Cato seems too severe a model, choose some Laelius, a gentler spirit. Choose a master whose life, conversation, and soul-expressing face have satisfied you; picture him always to yourself as your protector or your pattern. For we must indeed have someone according to whom we may regulate our characters; you can never straighten that which is crooked unless you use a ruler.
>
> (*Ep.* XI.10)

Modern Stoics may not choose either Cato the Younger (the archenemy of Julius Caesar) or Laelius Sapiens (a friend of the general Scipio Africanus). But we can be inspired by people like Nelson Mandela, or Susan Fowler (the woman who denounced the culture of sexual harassment at Uber). Or, in my own case, by my grandfather, an unknown person who nevertheless was capable of great love and integrity.

A Sampler of Stoic Spiritual Exercises

Stoicism has always been, from the inception, a practical philosophy. And, arguably, it got more so with the shift from the early Stoa of Zeno and Chrysippus to the late Stoa of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. In modern times, Pierre Hadot (1995, 2001) reproposed the notion of philosophy as a way of life, and authors such as William Irvine (2008), Donald Robertson (2018), and myself (Pigliucci 2017) have considerably expanded the concept of Stoic spiritual exercises, grounding them both in the ancient texts and in modern cognitive behavioral therapy.

In order to exemplify how this approach works, I am going to briefly discuss three such exercises, culled from a volume entirely devoted to Stoic practice (Pigliucci and Lopez 2019). The book in question contains 52 exercises in total, organized according to the standard disciplines of Epictetus: desire and aversion (about what we should properly desire or be averse to), action (how to deal with other people), and assent (how to question our own possibly mistaken "impressions" of things). In the following, I will present one exercise from each of the three disciplines. Each exercise begins with a hypothetical situation to set the stage, followed by a pertinent Stoic quote. In the book, we then explain the theory behind the quote, and guide the reader step-by-step through the practice of the exercise.

Example 1: Discipline of Desire and Aversion. Discover What's Really in Your Control and What's Not.

> Hypothetical vignette: We all tend to think that we have much more control over the outcomes of our actions than we actually do. Take for instance Melissa, who is preparing for an important test that will likely have a significant effect on the quality of the school she will be able to attend. Even though she has thoroughly prepared for the test, and chances are she will do very well, she spent the previous night in a state of anxiety and insomnia, which will definitely not help the following morning, come test time. Had Melissa learned about the Stoic approach to what is and is not in our control, could she have managed things better?

Stoic quote:

> Of all existing things some are in our power, and others are not in our power. In our power are thought, impulse, will to get and will to avoid, and, in a word, everything which is our own doing. Things not in our power include the body, property, reputation, office, and, in a word, everything which is not our own doing. (*Ench.* 1)

Explanation: The quote refers to a fundamental Stoic concept known as the dichotomy of control. Epictetus' *Enchiridion* begins with it, and it has a myriad applications in real life.

Dividing things sharply, as Epictetus does, into a class that is under our control and a class that is not under our control may seem artificial and inaccurate: aren't there many things that fall in-between, where we do not completely control the outcome, but we can influence it? Sure, but further reflection shows that even those cases can in turn be further broken down into the two elemental components. For instance, say that I'm playing a game of tennis with my friend. The overall outcome of the game is not under my control, though my actions clearly influence it (after all, I'm playing!). But we can be more precise and say that a certain number of things contributing to the outcome are completely under my control (how long I practiced before the game, my choice of racket, even my agreement to have my friend as the opponent), while others are completely outside of my control (how good a player my friend is, how long *he* practiced, what racket *he* chose, and so forth).

The crucial move here is to focus our mental energy and resources on the components we do control, and treat everything else as "indifferent." This doesn't mean that we don't care about the outcome of our actions (I *do* want to win my game against my friend!), only that we internalize the concept that in life sometimes things go our way and at other times they don't, despite the fact that we've done everything we could. As a bonus, developing this attitude of equanimity towards outcomes, according to the ancient Greco-Romans, brings about *ataraxia*, or serenity.

Exercise: In practice, this exercise can be done by picking a time near the end of the day when we sit down and write about something that has happened that day. Anything will do, so long as we are able to identify and list components that were or were not under our control. We should write down why we think any particular item on the list falls into one category or the other.

The point of the exercise is to internalize the concept of the dichotomy of control. The theory is rather simple and straightforward, but actually putting it consistently into practice is a different thing altogether. Just as modern cognitive behavioral therapy suggests, paying attention to what we are doing is the first step toward altering our behavior in the desired direction.

Example 2: Discipline of Action. Keep your Peace of Mind in Mind.

Hypothetical vignette: We set out at the beginning of the day to accomplish certain goals. But our minds can be a bit too focused on the immediate task at hand, neglecting that we should also keep a broader view of things. For instance, James went to the cinema with his daughter, with the intention to enjoy the movie and have a good bonding experience with her. Except that a jerk sitting two rows ahead of them started turning on his phone in the middle of the show, to check messages, or post on social media, or whatever. James became more and more irritated at the rude behavior, and his mounting anger ruined the evening for both he and his daughter. The Stoics would have advised James to remember that anger is a waste of emotional energy, and that we should set out to do anything with the dual goal of accomplishing the task if possible, and at the same of keeping our inner peace, which is always possible.

Stoic quote:

> When you are about to take something in hand, remind yourself what manner of thing it is. If you are going to bathe put before your mind what happens in the bath—water pouring over some, others being jostled, some reviling, others stealing; and you will

> set to work more securely if you say to yourself at once: "I want to bathe, and I want to keep my will in harmony with nature," and so in each thing you do; for in this way, if anything turns up to hinder you in your bathing, you will be ready to say, "I did not want only to bathe, but to keep my will in harmony with nature, and I shall not so keep it, if I lose my temper at what happens."
>
> (*Ench.* 4)

Explanation: Epictetus here becomes downright poetic, referring to our peace of mind as keeping "harmony with nature." Though a different translation is actually funny, stating: "I cannot keep harmony with nature if I go to pieces every time someone splashes some water on me." The same goes for James, and for ourselves in countless similar situations. Yes, the guy with the phone is being inconsiderate, but perhaps he can gently be educated, made aware that the glare from his phone is interfering with other people's enjoyment of the movie. Then again, if the offender is not going to be responsive, what is accomplished by getting upset about it, other than add a self-inflicted insult to injury?

The strategy in this case is to anticipate likely situations and prepare mentally to react appropriately. We know that people can be annoying at the cinema, so why do we expect things to always go smoothly? Given basic human psychology, it turns out to be far easier to deal with potentially stressful situations if we contemplate them ahead of time rather than just react to them.

As you can easily imagine, this exercise is going to be useful on countless occasions, not just at the movies or when one goes to the thermal baths (which isn't as popular these days). People do annoying things in the subway or on the bus, on the plane, at work, while we are on vacation, and on and on.

Exercise: This exercise is made of three distinct steps:

1. We begin by visualizing a specific task that we know from experience is likely to cause frustration, and that will need to be carried out today.
2. We then mentally rehearse the potentially difficult part of the situation, adding a personal mantra along the lines of "I want to do two things today: to accomplish X, but also to keep my inner harmony."
3. Finally, we mentally rehearse behaving in a serene fashion regardless of what will happen.

This sort of procedure would probably have helped James deal with his situation at the movies. But we need to be clear on one thing: to act in a calm manner doesn't mean to be a pushover, though for some reason the two are often confused. Indeed, part of James' rehearsing of the situation will be deciding how to approach the annoying guy and talk to him about what is happening. The crucial part is to do so while he is in control of his own reactions, rather than sliding into a fit of anger and starting to yell at the other person. The calm approach may or may not succeed. The angry one will almost certainly fail.

There is modern empirical backing for this Stoic technique, provided by scientific research on which brain pathways are activated when rehearsing and performing a given task. The two patterns of brain activity, it turns out, are very similar (Vyas et al. 2018), as if our mind were in a very real sense simulating what might later happen in the physical world. There is also convincing evidence that mental rehearsal is helpful in a variety of settings, from athletes (Jones and Stuth 1997) to health care trainees (Ignacio et al. 2017). The more we mentally simulate potential scenarios, the more likely we are to be able to calmly and effectively deal with real life challenges.

Example 3: Discipline of Assent. Catch and Counter Initial Impressions.

> Hypothetical vignette: Taya has been practicing Stoicism for a while now, and has noticed that she is getting better at catching herself before irritation or anger swell up. Sure, she is no sage, and occasionally still reacts in an intemperate manner to one situation or another. But she realizes that paying attention to her own reactions and reflecting on them has made her better at questioning her value judgments and cutting off anger at the onset.

Stoic quote:

> Make it your study then to confront every harsh impression with the words, "You are but an impression, and not at all what you seem to be." Then test it by those rules that you possess; and first by this—the chief test of all—"Is it concerned with what is in our power or with what is not in our power?" And if it is concerned with what is not in our power, be ready with the answer that it is nothing to you. (*Ench.* 1.5)

Explanation: You know the famous commercial slogan, "Just do it"? Well, what Epictetus is saying here, in a sense, is to go the opposite way: don't just do it, but rather stop and think about it, then decide if it's a good thing to do or not. I love how Epictetus is telling us to engage our impressions in an internal dialogue, questioning them to see if they stand up to scrutiny. It's a way to shift gear, so to speak, between what modern researcher Daniel Kahneman (2011) calls "fast" and "slow" thinking. While fast thinking is the only option in a pinch, when we don't have time to reflect more thoroughly, slow thinking is far more accurate, and a lot of Stoic training has to do with deliberately engaging with the situation at hand, instead of reacting automatically.

There are endless occasions to put Epictetus' advice into practice. Sure, your co-worker is attractive, and he has made it clear to you that he is interested. But you are in a long-term, loving relationship, so your first impression ("it would be nice to have sex with him") can be questioned and countered by the judgment that such a course of action would actually not be good for you, in the long run, because you will hurt your loved one and likely lose a precious thing in your life. Or maybe you are at a party, having a good time, and that bottle of wine is really beckoning to be picked up again. The impression is that it will be pleasurable to drink another glass. But your more considered judgment counters that impression with a reminder that you'll probably get drunk and feel horrible, or worse, you'll get into a car and cause an accident.

What about that strange clause at the end of Epictetus' quote, though: "it is nothing to you"? This does not need to be taken literally. Of course, relationships have meaning and are important. But to maintain a relationship is not entirely up to you, since it depends on the decisions and judgments of your partner. It may end even if you never cheated and did everything you could to be loving and supportive. The end of a relationship, though, does not reflect on your value as a human being, and in particular on whether you are a good person or not. According to the Stoics, the latter is the most important thing, so everything else is, by comparison, "indifferent," meaning that it should not affect your self-worth.

Exercise: This exercise is based on a fundamental tenet of Stoic psychology (which is actually supported by modern empirical research): when we experience the urge to take an action (like reaching for one more glass of wine) we do so because we are "assenting" (i.e., agreeing) to our "impression" (i.e., implied judgment) that that thing is good for us. The goal, then, is to train ourselves to slow down, pay attention, and—if need be—question those implied judgments.

The quote by Epictetus explicitly tells us how to do this in practice: whenever we experience a strong impression (i.e., something that we either intensely desire or dislike) we should talk to it as if it were another person. The first step is to ask ourselves whether that thing that we desire or dislike is under our control. And especially if it isn't, to let go of it by reminding ourselves that our virtue, or our serenity, is more important than the thing in question.

Another way to think about this exercise is that a lot of our judgments are automatic and implicit, and that the objective here is to make them deliberate and explicit. Sometimes, of course, we will end up agreeing with our first impressions. But you'd be surprised how many times that won't be the case.

Conclusion: The Stoic Outlook on Life

Stoicism has come a long way since Zeno of Citium walked the Athenian agora 24 centuries ago. It began as a practical philosophy, became somewhat theoretical under the influence of Chrysippus, then decidedly practical again for the three great Roman Stoics: Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

After the decline of the formal school Stoic philosophy influenced the thinking of the Christian fathers and of early modern philosophers like Descartes and Spinoza. And then its more practical side resurged thanks to cognitive behavioral therapy, the early work of Pierre Hadot, and the ongoing efforts of the people at Modern Stoicism.[7]

At the time of this writing, the largest social network of Stoic practitioners counts almost 74,000 members,[8] and there is an international effort to list and encourage the formation of new local Stoas throughout the planet.[9] My personal experience after having written two books on practical Stoicism for contemporary audiences (Pigliucci 2017; Pigliucci and Lopez 2019) and maintaining a website devoted entirely to Stoicism as practical philosophy[10] is that many people are benefiting from this ancient philosophy in their daily struggle to becoming better human beings and to cope with adversity and the general unpredictability of life.

Stoicism has never really gone away, but it is certainly back not just as a therapy for today's troubles, but as a thoughtful alternative (or even a complement) to other, equally ancient or more established, philosophies of life such as Buddhism (Wright 2017) and Secular Humanism (Kurtz 2007). Which means philosophy, the practice of loving wisdom that began with Thales, Pythagoras, and of course Socrates, is still the major source of inspiration for anyone who wishes to use reason as a guide to the life worth living.

Notes

1 On philosophy and human nature see: "Human nature matters," by Skye Cleary and Massimo Pigliucci, Aeon magazine, available online at https://aeon.co/essays/theres-no-philosophy-of-life-without-a-theory-of-human-nature (accessed 4 January 2019).

2 Cicero's Stoic Paradoxes, available online at https://archive.org/details/StoicParadoxesParadoxa StoicorumMarcusTulliusCicero (accessed 25 January 2019).

3 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, book 3, pp. 469–470, available online at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treatise_of_Human_Nature/Book_3:_Of_morals/Part_1/Section_1 (accessed 25 January 2019).

4 The obvious objection to this last bit is: well, what if someone points a gun to my head? Won't that force me to do what I don't want to do? Not really. You have a choice: either your life is worth more than what you are being asked to do, or the other way around. Either way, the choice is yours. Even at gunpoint.

5 Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, available online at www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/bentham1780.pdf (accessed 28 January 2019). Footnote at the beginning of Chapter 17: The Boundary around Penal Jurisprudence.
6 The irony about the ever popular trolley dilemmas is that they were introduced by Philippa Foot precisely to show the limitations and inadequacies of what she called consequentialist philosophies, like utilitarianism.
7 See: https://modernstoicism.com/ (accessed 4 February 2019).
8 See: www.facebook.com/groups/Stoicism/ (accessed 8 May 2020).
9 See: https://stoicfellowship.com/ (accessed 4 February 2019).
10 See: www.patreon.com/MassimoPigliucci (accessed 4 February 2019).

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STOIC COSMOPOLITANISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Simon Shogry

Consider the following sylvan scene. A babbling brook trickles through a virgin forest. Deer bend to drink from its clear waters, and birds sing from the canopies of ancient trees, which hang over a dense undergrowth teeming with plant and insect life. Many of the flora and fauna species here are endangered. And although a full scientific survey is not yet complete, a mining company reports that extracting the forest's lumber and other resources would increase profits considerably. Their envisioned operation would attract major investments, boosting the regional economy and creating hundreds of stable jobs.

One task of environmental ethics is to clarify whether this kind of mining operation is morally justified, by articulating and defending a general theory of environmental value. In developing such a theory, environmental ethicists identify which natural entities possess "intrinsic value." This technical phrase can be understood in different ways (see Jamieson 2008: 68–75 and Regan 1981: 22), but for our purposes here amounts to the following: an entity has intrinsic value if and only if its interests are morally significant. The mining company's drill, for instance, clearly lacks intrinsic value. Whether the drill is oiled or not, whether it is discarded after one use or a hundred—in general, the condition and survival of the drill—is not something that moral agents should consider in deciding how to act. By contrast, whatever has intrinsic value deserves our moral concern, and we ought to take account of its interests in assessing whether to perform an action affecting it. A theory of environmental value therefore determines how far into nature morality extends. Do the flora and fauna of our sylvan scene—the individual plants and animals as well as the larger ecosystem that they make up—have the same moral status as the mining company's drill?

Many of the founding studies in contemporary environmental ethics (e.g. Routley 1973) argued against one theory of environmental value—the anthropocentrist theory—on which *only human beings* have intrinsic value. Thus, in our case above, to decide whether the mining operation is justified, this theory would have us consider the effects of the forest's preservation or destruction on present and future humans, e.g., the aesthetic and scientific benefits of its preservation and the economic value of its destruction. But no further features of the case would be relevant for moral assessment, because the anthropocentrist theory denies intrinsic value to the plants and animals living within the forest, as well as to the river and the forest ecosystem as a whole. On the anthropocentric view, all non-humans are just like the mining company's drill, morally speaking. So, although the mining operation

would despoil, kill, and maim the non-human entities living in the forest, this fact has no moral bearing apart from its effects upon present or future humans.

Over the last fifty years, frustrated by the perceived limitations of anthropocentrism, environmental ethicists have articulated more expansive accounts of which natural entities have intrinsic value (for general discussion, see Campbell 2018: 57–60). One motivation for abandoning anthropocentrism is that, in the view of some environmental ethicists, the theory fundamentally misunderstands humanity's place in nature: rather than conceive of humanity as a dominant, all-consuming force—an attitude argued to be implicit in the anthropocentric theory—we should instead adopt the perspective of a reverential and humble peer. Others maintain that the anthropocentric theory is "speciesist," insofar as it grounds moral concern on an arbitrary characteristic: whether one is a member of the species *Homo sapiens*. In any event, by broadening the circle of moral concern beyond the human, non-anthropocentric theories justify more cases of environmental preservation. Although it is possible to defend many instances of conservation solely by its effects on present and future humans—consider the massive toll on human life and economic activity that will be exacted by climate change—the justification for environmental preservation becomes easier to establish if one assigns intrinsic value to all sentient creatures (Singer 2011; 1975) or to all living creatures (Taylor 1986), or even to non-living ecological systems (Rolston 1975; Naess 1973) and "the land" itself (Leopold 1949).

Contemporary environmental ethics thus investigates which natural entities have intrinsic value, and what kind of attitude we humans should cultivate towards the environment, with a view to determining whether particular cases of environmental protection are morally justified. The purpose of this essay is to examine whether there is anything in ancient Stoic philosophy—in its early Greek phase as well as its Roman reception—relevant to these contemporary projects, and to reconstruct how the Stoics would have approached these central questions of environmental ethics.

Within ancient Stoicism, I will focus on their celebrated cosmopolitanism—a dimension of Stoic thought we now understand better thanks to recent scholarly attention (Vogt 2008; Brennan 2005; Schofield 1991). But assessing how Stoic cosmopolitanism engages with questions of environmental value will require us to look at other Stoic views as well. This is due to the systematic, interlocking character of Stoic philosophy. To articulate and defend their ethical theory, the Stoics draw on their account of the natural world. Indeed, it is impossible to appreciate the motivations for Stoic cosmopolitanism—roughly, the claim that all human beings are members of the same "cosmopolis," or universal city, and so are entitled to moral concern—without taking note of central claims in Stoic physics.

In certain respects, Stoic physics chimes well with the perspective of some environmental writers today. The cosmos, as the Stoics conceive of it, is a living being, a unified organism of which every human, animal, insect, plant, and rock is an integral part. There is thus no sense in Stoic thought in which the human being is separated off from nature as a whole. As we will see, this physical thesis informs the Stoics' ethical outlook, which identifies a life "in agreement with nature" as the correct object of all human striving. The order and structure displayed in nature thus provides a template, on the Stoic account, for the best kind of human life.

However, it must be noted straightaway that Stoic ethics, and their cosmopolitanism in particular, stands on philosophical foundations deeply alien to the mainstream of today's environmental ethics. First and foremost, the Stoics are committed anthropocentrists. Our ancient sources are unambiguous that the Stoics hold that justice does not extend to non-human animals, much less to plants or "the land," insofar as only humans possess reason, and justice requires us to consider the interests of reason-possessing agents only.[1] Here the

Stoics effectively deny intrinsic value to any non-human part of the natural world, and this claim is also registered in Stoic cosmopolitanism. Although we ought to see any human, regardless of their station, as affiliated with us and worthy of moral concern, no animal or plant deserves this status because they lack reason. Apparently worse still, Stoic physics is explicitly teleological. The Stoics maintain that, in many cases, animals are created for the sake of humans, and plants for the sake of animals, and so argue from principles considered hopelessly antiquated, if not repugnant, from the perspective of modern biology.

Given these cross-currents in ancient Stoic thought, assessing the relevance of their cosmopolitanism for contemporary environmental ethics is a delicate task. More is required than noting superficial resemblances between Stoic claims and the environmental literature today. This essay attempts to clarify how Stoicism might be relevant to environmental questions by paying careful attention to the Stoics' own subtle views, which defy simplistic sloganeering.

First, I will present the Stoic justification for the thesis that there are only rational members of the cosmopolis—i.e., that moral concern extends to our fellow human and no further—and explore the foundations of this view in Stoic physics. Next, I will show that, like other anthropocentric theories, Stoic cosmopolitanism allows for environmental preservation and protection of non-human entities, so long as these activities ultimately benefit human beings. However, this justification for environmental protection is not entirely feeble, in part because the Stoics include the appreciation of natural beauty as a component of the good life. Humans are set up by nature to contemplate the order and complexity of the physical world, and so environmental degradation, in marring this harmonious system, frustrates humanity's natural goal. After exploring these facets of Stoic philosophy, and assessing to what extent they might justify environmental conservation, I will close with a critical appraisal of Stoic theory—specifically, of the claims that i) only humans possess reason and ii) only rational creatures are deserving of moral concern—and consider whether they are indispensable to the Stoic project. In exploring these issues, I hope to show that Stoic cosmopolitanism, and the broader ethical and physical framework of which it is a part, can fruitfully engage with today's questions of environmental value.

Stoic Cosmopolitanism and Stoic Physics

Like other Hellenistic schools of philosophy, the Stoics call upon their theory of the natural world to defend their account of the best human life. Stoic cosmopolitanism in particular depends on key features of Stoic physics, which we should now set out.

The universe, as the Stoics characterize it, is not a collection of inert matter moving according to fixed laws, as in the Newtonian model, but rather a living organism, embracing all things within it as its parts. What unites these parts into a single animal is the presence of Zeus, conceived of not as a fickle Olympian but an immanent corporeal principle of activity and change. Zeus is present everywhere in the cosmos—in humans, animals, insects, plants, rocks, as well as the fundamental physical elements, earth, air, fire, and water—regulating these natural entities with his thought and executing an all-encompassing rational plan for the course the universe will take. The Stoic universe is therefore governed by an enormously complex, occurrent act of thinking, carried out by a divine mind present everywhere within it (Cooper 2012: 152–3; Cooper 2004: 224–8). Indeed, as the product of Zeus's rationality, the universe is said to be providentially organized: everything that actually transpires in the world instantiates the best possible arrangement (Cicero *DND* 2.86–87; for general discussion see Sedley 2007: 210–38). Thanks to Zeus's meticulous administration, the cosmos we live in is a beautiful, well-ordered creation, with every kind of plant and animal making a distinct contribution to a single, overarching living system.

From this cursory summary, one can imagine how Stoics physics could hold interest for environmental ethicists interested in the claim that humans do not stand apart from nature but instead are fully integrated within it. In fact, Stoic thinking seems to have inspired the pantheism of the seventeenth century philosopher Baruch Spinoza, whose work in turn influenced the founders of deep ecology in the twentieth century (Brennan and Lo 2016). These writers saw the roots of their "biospheric egalitarianism" in the conception of nature as pervaded by divine reason, and some affinity between their view and the Stoics' has been proposed (Cheney 1989; see critical discussion in Stephens 1994 and Castelo 1996).

But while it is true, on Stoic theory, that humans, animals, plants, and rocks are all parts of the cosmos, humans retain a privileged status, as "offshoots" (DL 7.143) or "allies" (Seneca *Ep.* 92.70) of Zeus. Here the Stoics mean to express that, compared to every other part of the cosmos, human beings have received a more concentrated portion of divine rationality, a grant which enables us to use reason in our own right. Zeus's rationality can be seen everywhere in the cosmos—in the keen perceptual and locomotive powers of animals, for instance, or in the regular blossoming of plants, or even in the relatively unimpressive fact that rocks maintain their shape over time—but it is only in humans that Zeus has set up our minds with the capacity to think compositionally structured thoughts and to set our own course of action. These sophisticated cognitive powers of the human mind—our rationality—make us the cosmic part whose nature most closely approximates that of the whole (DL 7.86).

That humans are distinguished from plants and animals by our use of reason is a physical claim of great importance for Stoic ethics, as it forms the crux of their teleological analysis of human nature. To exercise reason is characteristic of human beings, and to exercise it virtuously—to think correct thoughts about one's situation and to act properly on that basis—suffices for happiness and is the single goal of a well-lived human life. But while this accomplishment is out of reach for plants and animals, as they lack reason altogether (Seneca *Ep.* 76.9–10), the Stoics still posit natural goals in plant and animal life, and explain the success of such lives according to whether their natural goals are attained (Klein 2016: 180–91; Stephens 2014: 212–22). As Cicero's Stoic spokesman remarks:

> The crops and fruits which the earth brings forth were made for the sake of animals, and the animals which it brings forth were made for the sake of humans (the horse for transport, the ox for ploughing, the dog for hunting and guarding). The human being himself has come to be in order to contemplate and imitate the world, being by no means perfect, but a tiny constituent of that which is perfect.
>
> (*DND* 2.37, tr. after Rackham)

And again, later in the same work:

> All the things there are in the universe that are used by human beings have been created and provided for the sake of human beings.
>
> (*DND* 2.154, tr. after Rackham)

Up and down the scale of nature, life is generated to fulfill a goal. And in many cases—horses, dogs, and oxen, for example—this goal will include some use for human beings (see also Porphyry, LS 54P). Indeed, Cicero's Stoic spokesman goes on to posit an anthropocentric purpose not only of the distribution of forests, mountains, and sea, but also of the abundance of minerals buried beneath the earth (*DND* 2.159–162, discussed in Sedley 2007: 234–5). We will consider in a moment the implications of this view for the

Stoic account of the proper treatment of animals and the environment at large. But for now, we should examine how Stoic teleology supports their cosmopolitanism.

Here the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiôsis* ("affiliation," "appropriation") becomes relevant (Vogt 2008: 99–110; cf. Stephens 1994: 279–82). Although they regard some creatures, like the horse, as teleologically ordered for human use, the Stoics also recognize natural goals that do not directly refer to humans. For instance, bulls naturally form horns for the sake of defense (Hierocles, LS 57C); turtles have shells for protection (Seneca, LS 57B); and bees cooperate with each other to construct honeycombs (Cicero, *De Fin.* 3.63; cf. *DND* 2.123–4). Indeed, Cicero reports that the early Stoic Chrysippus catalogued the teleological functions of myriad plant and animal species, specifying the natural goals implicit in their physical constitutions (*De Fin.* 4.28). In a further step, the Stoics claim that every animal is born with the capacity to perceive their own teleological function (a capacity for "self-perception") and is attracted to whatever preserves this functioning (to what is *oikeion* to the animal in question). As we see in toddlers struggling to take their first steps, or in overturned turtles attempting to right themselves, animals pursue the proper condition of their constitutions even in the face of pain (DL 7.85–86). The pursuit of teleological success, straight from birth, is thus hard-wired into every animal, as yet another beneficial dispensation from providential Zeus.

This teleological regularity in nature, which draws every animal to what is *oikeion* ("affiliated" or "appropriate") to it, is taken to support the Stoic view of cosmopolitan justice, on which all fellow humans must be treated with moral concern. The connection between these ideas is difficult to see, unless we recall a few presuppositions of the Stoic argument. First, the inborn orientation to what is appropriate obtains not only for animals but for humans as well, as a general fact about the behavior of animate creatures. Second, in parallel with other "cradle arguments" from the Hellenistic period, the Stoics maintain that facts about the behavioral patterns of newborns inform how we adult humans *ought* to act (Klein 2016; Brunschwig 1986). Finally, the Stoics regard mutual cooperation and sociality as appropriate for human beings—an essential feature of what it means to be human and part of our natural goal at all stages of life (Plutarch, LS 57E)—just as it is for other creatures such as bees or ants:

> The very fact of being human requires that no human be considered a stranger to any other. Some of our bodily parts, for example our eyes and ears, are as it were created just for themselves. Others, for example legs and hands, also enhance the utility of the other parts. In the same way, certain animals of great size are created merely for themselves … [but] take ants, bees, and storks—they act for the sake of others. Yet the ties between human beings are far closer. Hence we are fitted by nature to form associations, assemblies, and states.
>
> (Cicero *De Fin.* 3.63, tr. Woolf modified)

Humans are set up by nature to create bonds with one another—we are "suited for community" [*koinônikon*], as another source puts it (Arius in Stobaeus, *Ecl*. 2.109; cf. Seneca *On Anger* 1.5.2–3; 2.31.6–7). This teleological orientation toward forming associations of mutual concern accounts for present human behavior (e.g., why we live in cities) and also sets an ideal for how we should behave (giving due regard to the interests of *all* human beings, as members of a single cosmic city) (Hierocles, LS 57D). The Stoics thus find an explanation for the human tendency to form communities—and a sketch of the best kind of human community—in the teleological architecture of nature. Given the kind of beings we are and the natural goals we have, we ought to treat every human being as affiliated with us

and view them as worthy of concern. Adopting this cosmopolitan perspective is required if we are to live "in agreement with nature."

But if we are to live as nature intends, why do the Stoics think that our concern must extend to *all* human beings? That this is the Stoic view is confirmed in many sources (see Vogt 2008: esp. 86–90; cf. Schofield 1991: 104–11). In a memorable image, the Stoic Hierocles draws a series of concentric circles, standing in for the humans we are affiliated with, beginning with the self and extending outwards, from family to friends to countrymen until reaching a final circle encompassing "the whole human race":

> It is the task of a well-tempered man, in his proper treatment of each group, to draw the circles together somehow towards the center, and to keep zealously transferring those from the enclosing circles into the enclosed ones.
>
> (Hierocles, LS 57G, tr. LS)

Stoic cosmopolitanism requires us to feel affiliated with members of all these circles, even the "most distant Mysian" (LS 57H), to transfer them to the center of our concern and treat them fairly (Cicero *De Off.* 1.12, 3.42).

One accomplishment of recent scholarship has been to root this claim in the Stoic idea that all adult humans possess rationality (Schofield 1991: 67–74; cf. Vogt 2008: 105–10). On this interpretation of the Stoic view, it is because we share rationality that the collection of human beings constitutes a single community living under a common law. As Marcus Aurelius argues:

> If mind is common to us, so also is reason, in virtue of which we are rational. If that is so, the reason which prescribes what is and is not to be done is also common. If that is so, law also is common; if that is so, we are citizens; if that is so, we partake in a kind of political system; if that is so, the universe is as it were a city.
>
> (*Med.* 4.4, tr. Schofield; cf. Cicero *De Leg.* 1.31, *DND* 2.79, 148)

In this compressed inference, Marcus argues that all human beings are bound by a common law and live in a single city—the universe—insofar as we all possess reason. The train of thought here is hard to follow if we assume that rationality consists in mere means-ends calculations. But the Stoic conception of reason is much more robust: whoever shares in reason thereby also shares a commitment to a set of values prescribing "what is and is not to be done," as Marcus puts it (Schofield 1991: 67–72; Frede 1994). All rational creatures come with a basic conceptual orientation that speaks to how we should treat one another, and the Stoics regard these shared principles of sociality as justifying the claim that all human beings constitute a single community of cooperative concern (Magrin 2018). Of course, the Stoics allow that our basic conceptual orientation can be further refined—to do this we must employ the Stoic system of logic and dialectic—and that the end result of this refinement is wisdom and Sagehood. In the Sage, we see rationality fully developed, a human mind perfectly in sync with the thinking of Zeus as he governs the cosmos (DL 7.87–88).

According to this reconstruction of Stoic cosmopolitanism, the shared possession of rationality entitles all human beings to membership in a single community. In recognizing this fact, and seeing all humans as the proper object of our affiliation, we realize our natural goal of mutual cooperation. Sages—perfected human agents—have earned full citizenship in the cosmopolis, by internalizing and obeying the common law binding all rational

creatures as such (Vogt 2008: 90–93). But even those falling short of Sagehood—the vast majority of human beings—are not excluded from the community of moral consideration, insofar as our shared rational nature endows us, if only inchoately, with the same basic norms of proper sociality.

Stoic Anthropocentrism and Justifications for Environmental Protection

For those interested in today's environmental ethics, however, the Stoic celebration of reason has a dark side, inasmuch as the Stoics maintain further that, other than the gods, *only* humans possess reason, and so exclude all non-human parts of the cosmos from the realm of moral concern. This anthropocentric implication is spelled out explicitly in our most authoritative source for Stoic political philosophy, immediately following its presentation of cosmopolitanism:

> But though they hold that there is a code of law which binds humans together, the Stoics do not consider that any such code exists between humans and other animals. Chrysippus made the famous remark that all other things were created for the sake of humans and gods, but that humans and gods were created for the sake of their own community and society; and so humans can use animals for their own benefit with impunity. He added that human nature is such that a kind of civil code mediates the individual and the human race: whoever abides by this code will be just, whoever breaches it unjust.
>
> (Cicero, *De Fin.* 3.67, tr. Woolf)

As we might have guessed from the fact that Hierocles's circles embrace "the whole human race" but no further, cosmopolitan justice, on the Stoic view, requires giving moral concern to all human beings but to no part of the cosmos that is not human (cf. Plutarch, LS 67A and discussion in Vogt 2008: 86–90). Indeed, this seems to have been one of the main theses of Chrysippus's now-lost work *On Justice*: "there is no relation of justice between us and the other animals, on account of their dissimilarity" (DL 7.129). Presumably, this "dissimilarity" consists in their lack of rationality (Seneca *Ep.* 73.9–10; Porphyry *De Ab*. 3.1.2).[2]

Given this anthropocentric commitment, on what grounds could the Stoics endorse environmental protection? Justice, as we have seen, demands due regard for the members of the cosmopolis, and so for all human beings but no non-rational plant or animal. Thanks to excellent recent scholarship, we can now spell out more precisely what this due regard amounts to (Klein 2015; Cooper 2012; Vogt 2008; Brennan 2005), and thus shed light on how the Stoics might justify conservation activities.

Elsewhere, the Stoics define justice as the "knowledge which distributes value to each," that is, to each person (Arius, LS 61H, my translation). "Value" [*axia*] is a technical term in Stoic ethics, and attaches to things like health, wealth, bodily pleasure and strength—items facilitating a normal human life and appropriate for us to select (DL 7.105). Controversially, however, the Stoics deny that happiness requires us to possess a certain amount of valuable items. If we are virtuous, then nothing else is needed to live a life in agreement with nature: whether healthy or sick, rich or poor, the virtuous person is happy (Cicero *De Fin.* 3.33, 3.42). For this reason, health, wealth, and so on are said to be "preferred" but "indifferent": their opposites—disease, poverty, etc.—are likewise indifferent but "dispreferred" (DL 7.102–103; Cicero *De Fin.* 3.50). These labels should be used with caution, however, since the Stoics do not recommend diffidence or aloofness toward indifferents.

Although their possession is not necessary for happiness, these items have value, and, tellingly, the Stoics describe them as the "matter" of virtue (Plutarch *Comm. Not.* 1069e). What valuable items we select, and why, reveals whether our thoughts agree with Zeus and display virtue (cf. Arius, LS 58K; see Klein 2015 for detailed discussion).

Consistent with this understanding of indifferents and virtue, the Stoics argue that acts of justice are those which distribute indifferents among humans fairly. This is the idea contained in the Stoic definition of justice quoted above: the just agent knows how to apportion items of value to whom, i.e., what the fair distribution of indifferents is, in whatever situation she finds herself. Scholars dispute whether the just agent arrives at this view on the basis of general rules concerning the distribution of indifferents (Striker 1987), or if instead such determinations must be made case-by-case (Inwood 1999). In any event, the Stoics think that in every scenario there is a fact about what the fair distribution of value is, and that this fact is known by the just agent.

Cosmopolitan justice, then, forbids destruction of the environment whenever this destruction would produce an unfair distribution of value among human beings. For instance, suppose that, by polluting a river with toxic waste, a chemical corporation cuts costs and increases the wealth of its shareholders. But this river is also a water source for a nearby town. Due to the disease, death, and economic destitution resulting from the pollution, this act is unjust. The gain in value for one group (the shareholders) comes about through a loss of value of another (the townsfolk) and thus displays the hallmark of injustice, on the Stoic view: "It is alien to justice to deprive someone else in order to acquire for oneself" (Cicero *De Fin.* 3.70, tr. Brennan).

> For one human being to deprive another in order to increase their welfare at the cost of the other person's welfare is more contrary to nature than death, poverty, pain, or any other things that can happen to one's body or one's external possessions. For, to begin with, it destroys human communal living and society. For if we are each at the ready to plunder and carry off another's advantages for the sake of our own, that will necessarily demolish the thing that is in fact most according to nature, namely the social life of human beings
>
> (Cicero *De Off.* 3.21, tr. Brennan)

In polluting the river to gain money, the shareholders take more than their fair share of preferred indifferents and thereby act unjustly. Here the Stoics seem to emphasize the antisocial attitude implicit in any unfair distribution of indifferents—rather than the deprivation of value itself—as what makes such actions unjust. If one acquires value by means of depriving it from others, one thereby evinces a vicious state of mind insofar as one disrespects one's fellow members of the cosmopolis and misunderstands the proper scope of one's affiliations.[3] Furthermore, regardless of its profitability, the chemical pollution would despoil the town's communal property. This fact is morally significant for the Stoics, since their account of justice requires that we respect such property (Cicero *De Off.* 1.20–1; *De Fin.* 3.67; see detailed discussion in Brennan 2005: 204–10).

In general, then, Stoic principles prohibit environmental degradation whenever it disrespects the members of the cosmopolis—either by violating their property or imposing an unfair distribution of value—with the result that the perpetrator engages in vice.

What about the effect of pollution on non-human entities? In our scenario above, fish would be poisoned, plants would wither, and the riparian mammals would die painful deaths.[4] The river itself would be deformed and the functioning of the biome altered. But considered independently of how they impact the distribution of value among human

beings, these facts are morally irrelevant. Because justice extends only to rational creatures, and because only humans naturally acquire reason, the loss of life and health in non-humans is morally insignificant, in and of itself.

In principle, then, we can see why Cicero's Stoic spokesman remarks that "humans can use animals for their own benefit with impunity" (*De Fin.* 3.67). So long as it would not affect the distribution of value among human beings, there is no moral reason to treat animals, plants, or "the land" one way or another (cf. Cicero *DND* 2.151–2). Of course, more often than not, the way we treat non-humans *does* have such an effect. Besides the obvious example of climate change, factory-farming practices may ultimately undermine global human health and so would be regarded as unjust on Stoic theory, since this deprivation of value comes about for the sake of private profit.

Before leaving things here, we must examine one further aspect of Stoic thought that may allow for more environmental conservation than our reconstruction so far suggests. In one passage of his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius recommends conscientious treatment of animals and other non-rational entities:

> In the case of non-rational animals and objects and things in general, treat them with generosity of spirit and freedom of mind, since you have rationality and they do not. In the case of human beings, since they have rationality, treat them in a way that befits membership in a community [*koinônikôs*].
>
> (*Med.* 6.23, tr. Gill, modified)

The second sentence reflects the well-attested Stoic thought that our shared rationality entitles all human beings to membership in the cosmopolis and thus to full moral consideration. By contrast, we may be tempted to dismiss the first sentence of the quotation as a theoretically-uninformed aside. After all, the Stoics exclude non-humans from the cosmopolis and characterize many animals as teleologically ordered for human use. So why should we treat them "with generosity of spirit" [*megalophronôs*]? However, orthodox Stoic principles may yet legitimize the considerate attitude Marcus expresses here.

In his work *On Nature*, Chrysippus is reported to have described the teleological purpose of certain animals, such as the peacock, as follows:

> Beauty is the purpose for which many of the animals have been produced by nature, since nature is a lover of the beautiful and delights in diversity … the peacock's tail on account of its beauty is the purpose for which the peacock has come to be.
>
> (Plutarch *Stoic. Rep.* 1044c, tr. after Cherniss)

Just as the natural goal of the horse is human transportation (Cicero *DND* 2.37), and the pig, human consumption (Porphyry, LS 54P; Cicero *DND* 2.160), the peacock also comes about for the sake of human use (see detailed discussion in Sedley 2007: 231–8). But while the horse and pig facilitate the proper functioning of the human body, the peacock seems to contribute to the proper functioning of the human *mind*. The natural goal for human beings is to live in agreement with nature, or, equivalently, to employ our rational nature virtuously (Arius, LS 63A). One instance of virtuous activity is the contemplation of the beauty of the cosmos—its "diversity," rational structure, and harmonious order (cf. DL 7.100–101). "The human being himself has come to be in order to contemplate and imitate the world," as Cicero's Stoic spokesman puts the point (*DND* 2.37, tr. above). And as Epictetus comments:

> [Zeus] introduced the human being as a student of [Zeus] and his works—and not merely as a student but also as an interpreter of these things. Therefore it is wrong for humans to begin and end where the non-rational animals do; we should rather begin where they do and end where nature has ended in our case. Nature ended at studying and attending to things and at a way of life in harmony with nature. See to it then that you do not die without having studied these.
>
> (*Diss.* 1.6.19–22, tr. after LS)

To fulfill our natural goal—to accomplish the task for which Zeus created us—we must study the complexity and teleological structure displayed in Zeus's creation. Contemplation of the physical world is required for, and a part of, the best human life.[5]

We should note, of course, that human activities did not pose a threat to global biodiversity in the era when Stoic ideas were formulated, and that the ancients had no inklings of the scale of species and habitat loss happening today. But given the Stoic injunction to contemplate the cosmos as part of the good life—and their conception of nature as teleologically structured, with every cosmic part contributing to the orderliness and beauty of the whole—it is tempting to attribute to them the following view. When carried out on a massive scale, environmental destruction threatens the virtuous exercise of our rationality, and so frustrates our natural goal, insofar as it robs us of suitable objects of contemplation. Human-caused species loss tampers with Zeus's perfectly constructed creation (cf. Cicero, *DND* 2.88) by removing a stable contribution to cosmic order—a species of plant or animal—and so hinders our appreciation of the well-arranged whole. When a species goes extinct, nature becomes that much less "diverse" (cf. Plutarch above), with the result that virtuous agents have fewer opportunities to think the excellent thoughts that constitute a happy life.

Admittedly, there is no direct evidence that these ideas were arrayed by the Stoics to justify environmental protection in this way. And there is certainly no systematic theory lying behind these observations that would, e.g., adjudicate conflicts between the preservation of cosmic teleological order and the amplification of value for human beings. And it may be that contemplating nature's beauty does not require the actual existence of such beauty—would film-reels of a bucolic scene be enough? I submit, however, that the peculiar resources of the Stoic system gesture towards an additional justification for environmental protection besides respect for communal property and fair distribution of value. Conservation of the environment provides an indispensable venue for the contemplative activity of the Sage, by allowing her to appreciate the harmony and beauty present in the cosmic order and thus attain the human goal.

Stoicism Without Anthropocentrism?

In closing, I will now assume a more critical stance toward Stoic cosmopolitanism, raising doubts that may have already crossed the reader's mind.

First, one might question the anthropocentric claim that *all and only* humans possess rationality. While the Stoics grant that children are not born rational—they are said to acquire rationality at a later age (Aëtius, *SVF* 2.83)—one might still object that it is not the case that all adults possess reason. Accident victims who have fallen into a "persistent vegetative state," as well as the developmentally challenged, seem to be obvious counterexamples. Moreover, it is not the case that *only* humans possess reason, as the Stoics themselves seem to recognize when they characterize Zeus and the divine as rational (cf. Cicero, *De Fin.* 3.67 above). Another challenge to humans as the exclusive possessors of

reason can be found in the claim that there are "non-human persons" (Singer 2011: 94–100)—advanced mammals such as dolphins, whales, or apes, who use language and grasp inferences, employing something functionally equivalent to a rational mind. In short, if we take seriously the Stoic conception of reason, it is hard to see why all and only humans possess it (cf. Stephens 1994; Castelo 1996; Gill 2016).

In response to these objections, the Stoics could insist that "rational," in the claim that all and only humans are rational, should be understood as "the kind of being that *naturally acquires and uses reason*" (cf. Seneca *Ep.* 124.8–9). Children, adult accident victims, and the developmentally challenged would then count as rational—they are the kind of beings that naturally acquire reason, although they lack it at present—and Zeus and the divine would not, as these latter entities are never without reason and always use it perfectly (Cicero *DND* 2.21, 36, 39; Philo *SVF* 3.372). When it comes to the non-human animal candidates, however, the Stoics seem to go along with the assumptions of their philosophical tradition (cf. Aristotle *NE* 10.8, 1178b25–28) and reject out of hand that any non-human animal could display the cognitive sophistication that is the hallmark of reason.

One may be tempted, then, to revise the Stoic view so that certain advanced mammals rise to the level of rationality. This would be to expand the boundaries of the cosmopolis beyond the human, but to retain rationality as the criterion of membership (cf. Epictetus *Diss.* 2.8.8). On this neo-Stoic view, advanced mammals, as reason-possessing creatures, would have a claim on items of value, and any fair distribution of indifferents would have to take their interests into account. Moreover, it would be open to these non-human reasoners to attain virtue and happiness, since the virtuous condition of rationality would no longer be found only among adult humans.

Alternatively, one might question the Stoic premise that rationality is the basis for intrinsic value. However, this is to reject the core of the Stoic theory, as one would have to abandon the orthodox Stoic justification for the existence of the cosmopolis—that there is a single city made up of all reasoners, since to have reason entails sharing the same set of basic social norms. Consequently, this view would have to start from the beginning and articulate a new rationale for moral consideration. The result, I suspect, would be a theory justifying additional cases of environmental protection but no longer recognizably Stoic.[6]

Notes

1 The Stoics view the possession of reason as the sole "morally relevant criterion": cf. Goodpaster 1978. Thus Epictetus says of the donkey that, if it were to acquire reason, "it would no longer be subject to us … but would be our equal and peer" (*Diss*. 2.8.8). Note that, strictly speaking, the Stoics hold that the gods, as well as humans, possess rationality. So, it is only among non-divine entities that humans are alone in possessing reason. I set aside this complication for now but will return later on to consider some implications of divine rationality.

2 Cicero here mentions gods, as well as humans, as the beings for whose sake animals are created (see also *DND* 2.133, 154). And elsewhere the gods are included among the citizens of the cosmopolis (*DND* 2.78–79, 154). These claims are important for understanding why humans must contemplate and study the cosmos, as a perfect creation of the gods and instantiation of rational order and beauty, but not for understanding what we owe to non-human animals and plants. As DL 7.129 confirms, "anthropocentric" is thus an apt label for the Stoic theory of environmental value, in the sense relevant to contemporary environmental ethics.

3 See Sandler 2007 for a contemporary articulation of virtue-based environmental ethics.

4 Note that here again I am restricting consideration to non-divine entities.

5 This important passage is also discussed by Magrin 2018: 299–300 and Stephens 2014: 213–15. See also Cicero *DND* 2.153. On my interpretation, the Stoics defend a kind of "weak anthropocentrism," insofar as they view nature not only as a "mere satisfier of fixed and often

consumptive values [but] also [as] an important source of inspiration in value formation" (Norton 1984: 135).

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33

FEMINISM AND STOIC SAGEHOOD

Lisa Hill

Inspired by the teachings of Socrates and Diogenes of Sinope (Diogenes the Cynic), Stoicism was founded at Athens by Zeno of Citium in around 300 BCE and was influential throughout the Greco-Roman world until around 200 CE. The cosmopolitanism, universalism and egalitarianism for which it is well known has given rise to claims that the Stoics were feminists or at least proto-feminists (see, for example, Hill 2001). In this chapter I focus on a particular aspect of their attitude to women, namely, whether the Stoics saw them as equally capable with men of pursuing and achieving sagehood, a topic that has provoked some scholarly disagreement. Determining exactly where they stood on this count –and also the extent to which sagehood entailed absolute equality of treatment for men and women—has been hindered by the paucity of textual evidence on the early Greek Stoics (none of the original works of Zeno and Chrysippus have survived) (Schofield 1991, 3–21). However, we have reports of them from sources like Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers.* Further, the textual evidence for later, Roman Stoicism is readily available through the surviving Greek and Latin writings of Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, C. Musonius Rufus, Marcus Aurelius and Hierocles. There is a particular focus here on the thought of the most feministically progressive Roman Stoic, Musonius Rufus.

I argue that, despite some inconsistency, there are good grounds for the belief that the Stoics did see women as equally eligible with men for the status of sage. Along with defending this claim, I also explore the virtues of and paths to sagehood for Stoic women. But before proceeding to the particulars I first explore the general Stoic approach to women's capacities and entitlements in the light of their broader cosmopolitan commitments and conception of "reason."

Stoic Cosmopolitanism, Impartiality and Egalitarianism

Not everyone accepts that the Stoics were feministic. Elisabeth Asmis notes that, for many scholars, "the apparent equality of women" is "a Cynicising aberration of the early Stoics" rather than a core teaching (Asmis 1996: 68), a view she contests in her own work. It is true that there is inconsistency as well as sexism and even moments of misogyny in Stoic thought (Hill 2001). For example, the Roman Stoic Epictetus says that Epicurean doctrines are so pernicious that they "not even fit for women" (*Diss.* III.vii.20) while Cicero stipulates that his ideal state would employ "a censor to teach men to rule

their wives" (Cicero, *De Rep.* IV.vi.6: 237). Yet, at heart, despite the lapses of its various exponents, Stoicism was necessarily committed to the equality of women due to its core commitment to the ideals of the *cosmopolis*.

The idea that we should condition ourselves to regard everyone as being of equal value and concern is at the center of Stoic cosmopolitanism. The Stoics were not alone in promoting this ideal: the Cynics were also cosmopolitan. But it was the Stoics—the dominant and most influential of the Hellenistic schools—who systematized and popularized the concept of the *oikoumenê*, or world state, the human world as a single, integrated city of natural siblings. Impartiality, universalism and egalitarianism were at the heart of this vision. The Stoics insisted that being human implies personhood, a profound innovation in the way strangers and other marginalized people should be regarded and treated.

The Stoic challenge to particularism was extremely subversive for a time when racism, classism, sexism and the systematic mistreatment of non-citizens was a matter of course. It was hardly thought controversial, for example, that Aristotle should declare that "[t]he male is superior and the female inferior; one rules and the other is ruled" (*Politics*, 1254a: 10). Similarly, ethnic prejudice was the norm rather than the exception in antiquity. Aristotle opines that some individuals are deficient in reason (*Politics*, 1254b: 12), lacking a deliberative faculty and belonging "by nature" not to himself but "to another." Such individuals may be used as means to the ends of others (*Politics,*1254a: 10). They are slaves by nature, incapable of "the good life," and hence unsuitable for a role in the *polis* (*Politics* 1280a, 31–5). Authority and subordination are, for Aristotle, conditions that are not only inevitable "but expedient" (*Politics* 1254a: 11).

The Stoics were radical for rejecting the idea that some people have inferior moral capacities or that others are natural slaves. They insisted that distinctions based on ethnicity, gender and class were irrelevant and admitted disciples from all social and ethnic groups. A person's status and social location tells us nothing about their capacity for sagehood since these things are only a matter of luck and convention anyway. After all, as Seneca points out, "Socrates was no aristocrat. Cleanthes worked at a well and served as a hired man watering a garden. Philosophy did not find Plato already a nobleman; it made him one" (Seneca 2002: *Ep*. 44.3). There is no such thing as a "nobody." Philosophy, when practiced properly, "never looks into pedigrees." This is because it doesn't need to: every person "if traced back to their original source, spring[s] from the gods." Although the world—and the unwise who often inhabit it—discriminate and exclude certain people from the rewards of conventional life, a "noble mind is free to all … we may all gain distinction. Philosophy neither rejects nor selects anyone; its light shines for all" (Seneca, *Ep.* XLIV. 1–3: 287). Social, ethnic and gender distinctions are all displaced by the single division that exists between "good" and "bad."

The Stoics draw the distinction between humans and animals, concluding that only humans have reason. Chryssipus declares that no relation of justice holds between humans and animals because animals are not rational (DL 7.129: 233; Cicero, *De Fin.* III.xx.67: 287–9). Our possession of reason and the ability to interpret "external impressions" means that human beings are ends in themselves and may not, therefore, be used as are animals—that is, instrumentally for the sake of some other person's end (Epictetus *Diss.*, I.vi.18–22: 45–7; Stanton 1968: 185; Cicero *De Off.*, I.14: 15–17). Anyone who is human is a person with entitlements, an equal unit of value regardless of her secondary characteristics or relationship to us personally.

The Stoics constantly affirm that outward appearances are not worth very much. The only praiseworthy qualities, says Seneca, are those that inhere in a person and which are peculiar to human beings (Seneca *Ep.* XLI.7–9: 277; see also Epictetus *Diss.*, III.i.24–7: 13–15). Therefore, the only thing that counts when considering how a person should be treated is whether s/he is human; if so, then s/he is entitled to our respect (Seneca *Ep.* XLI.7–9: 277; see also Epictetus *Diss.*, III.i.24–7: 13–15). Equality demands impartiality: the wise person understands that the moral laws governing her behavior apply to everyone regardless of ethnicity, class, blood ties (Clark, 1987: 65, 70), and gender (see, for example, Musonius, *Lecture 4*; Hill 2001).

Reason

It is "reason"—a universal trait—that brings us to this realization. Reason is universal because all of humanity shares in a common soul; we are all "kinsmen," the "offspring of Zeus," each bearing a particle of the divine "mind-fire" spirit (Epictetus *Diss.*, I.13.1–5: 99). Our natural kinship both with God and with each other renders the "whole universe" "one Commonwealth of which both gods and men are members" (Cicero *De Leg.*, I. vii.23: 323).

Not only is reason universal, say the Stoics, so is the type of virtue needed for the pursuit of sagehood and the happiness it naturally brings with it. Importantly, happiness is synonymous with wisdom and virtue: it is in "virtue," says Zeno, "that happiness consists; for virtue is the state of mind which tends to make the whole of life harmonious" (DL VII.89: 197). We all have the capacity for wisdom and virtue, says Seneca, and furthermore, we are all equally *desirous* of it: everyone "crave[s] the happy life" (Seneca *Ep.* 44.6: 291).

For scholars of Stoicism reason is generally regarded as a kind of moral intuition, a faculty given to us by Zeus and shared with "Him." When we behave with respect and compassion towards others we are "remember[ing] and recogniz[ing] the source from which [we] sprang" (Cicero *De Leg.*, I.viii.24: 325). But reason also seems to go beyond moral intuition to encompass a capacity for deductive reasoning from explicit premises. As Cicero puts it, reason "enables us to draw inferences, to prove and disprove, to discuss and solve problems, and to come to conclusions" (Cicero *De Leg.*, I.x.30: 329). Within the apparent chaos of life, the one thing that is really within our control is the capacity to apprehend appearances thoughtfully and correctly (Epictetus *Diss.*, I.1.7–12: 9–11). It is this quality, possessed by everyone, that enables us to achieve a type of nobility (Seneca "On Benefits," *Moral Essays*, III.18.2: 161). I say more on this topic below.

Women's Equal Capacity for Sagehood

Notably, women possess these abilities equally with men, a view shared by Stoics of all periods. As Asmis observes, there was "an underlying agreement" between the early Stoics and the proposal made by Plato in the *Republic* "that men and women are equally fit to be philosopher rulers in a state that forms a single, sexually permissive family" (Asmis 1996: 68). Accordingly, Plato argued that, since female guardians will perform the same duties as male guardians, they should receive the same education (Pomeroy 1974: 33–5).

Cleanthes wrote a discourse on the topic: "That Virtue is the same in Man and in Woman" (DL VII.175: 283**),** while Musonius taught that women deserve the same education as men. Since women, too, are "human beings," they will need to learn philosophy in order to acquire a sense of justice and develop the sociable virtues. After all, "could it be that it is fitting for men to be good but not women?" Further, women should also be

"judged by the same moral standards as men" (Musonius *Lecture 3,* 2: 28; *Lectures 3* and *4, passim*). For Musonius it is appropriate for all human beings to "develop good character" and to "behave nobly"; since the study of philosophy is the only way to achieve these things, both men and women should be educated (*Lecture* 3.8.33). Therefore, although there are problems and complexities in their approach (see below), there is little doubt that the Stoics saw women as eligible for sagehood.

The Goal of Sagehood is a Duty for Everyone

It should be noted that, despite its naturalness and divine origin, possessing the spark of reason will not of itself lead us to the moral life; reason must be cultivated so that it can blossom into "wisdom" (Cicero *De Leg.*, I.23). Along with the divine gift of reason comes a sacred obligation to cultivate and develop it, therefore everyone with "intellect" should study philosophy. It is "plain," says Musonius, "that your duty lies in the pursuit of philosophy." Because "being good is the same as being a philosopher," Zeus "bids you" to study philosophy "even when your own father forbids it" (Musonius *Lecture 16*. 7–8: 66). Therefore, women not only have a right but a *duty* to be educated, and anyone who stands in their way is in violation of the laws of the *cosmos*. As a consequence, just like men women must defy their fathers if the latter seek to bar their way to sagehood.

The expectation that women should be educated was particularly radical for its time—even more than the idea that slaves or foreigners were entitled to an education—since foreigners and slaves, notably Epictetus, were often employed as tutors whereas women were not. Still, the demand that all should be educated might sound empty coming from an antique author in the sense that, realistically, only the privileged few would have had the opportunity to achieve sagehood. In ancient Athens and Rome this would have practically limited admission to the *cosmopolis* to middling to high-born males. But the Stoics sought to address this state of affairs by accepting everyone into their schools (Cicero *De Leg.*, I.30: 330–31). In order to make sure that this injunction was more than a complacent gesture towards formal equality, Stoic academies were originally held in the open: Zeno spoke from the public porch (*Stoa*) so that anyone who wished could hear his teachings.

Wisdom and Virtues of the Sage

The Stoics thought that everyone should be educated. By contrast, Plato who, while more generous in his assessment of what some individual women might be capable of, insisted nonetheless that people are fitted by birth for certain functions or roles; therefore, only an exceptional few women would receive a philosophical education (Nussbaum 2000: 222–5). In other words, virtue is not the same for everyone. The Stoics—and especially Musonius—are not very interested in differences and more interested in prosecuting their case that in order to live the good human life *everyone* should—and could—cultivate the same kinds of virtue. "It is obvious," he observes, "that there is not one type of virtue for a man and another for a woman … what, after all, would be the usefulness of a foolish man or woman" (*Lecture 4*: 2: 31).

This universalizable model of virtue embodied the four "ethical excellences" of courage, moderation, justice and wisdom. Musonius' conception of wisdom is the standard Stoic one, denoting practical wisdom [*phronêsis*], the capacity to make moral choices. It is obvious also that, in order to live a good and happy life, everyone is both in need of and capable of exercising justice [*dikaiosynê*] and also that everyone should exercise self-control [*sôphrosynê*] (Musonius *Lecture 4*: 2: 31). Epictetus too emphasized that a person "who

is going to be good and excellent" must practice the art of "choice and refusal … that he may act in an orderly fashion, upon good reasons and not carelessly" (*Diss.* 3.2.1–2). Contrary to the common belief that they were determinists, our ability to make good choices based on our ability to perceive well in the course of daily life is something that is in our power or "up to us" [*eph' hêmin*]; good moral character [*prohairesis*] gives us the capacity for sound opinions, judgments, desires and intentions in the everyday world. All Stoic virtues are, it seems, virtues for the lived and embedded rather than the sequestered, contemplative life.

Courage

The virtue of courage, as understood and re-described by the Stoics, exemplifies this embeddedness. But that courage is a virtue that women can share with men needs some defending, or so the Roman Stoics seem to think (Nussbaum 2000: 222–5; Grahn-Wilder 2018: 162). This is doubtless related to the fact that the word "courage" translates to *andreia*, "which is always closely linked … to the idea of manliness" (Nussbaum 2002: 288). There is also the Aristotelian prejudice to overcome: in the *Poetics* Aristotle opined that it was not proper for women to exhibit *andreia* (*Poet*. 1454a16–29; Grahn-Wilder 2018: 162). To those who claim that "courage is an appropriate characteristic for men only" Musonius retorts that because women's responsibilities are just as critical as men's, it is certainly "necessary" for a woman "to be courageous and free from cowardice" so that she does not give in to either pain or fear. This might cause her to "submit to something shameful," including threats and intimidation from men (*Lecture 4*. 3: 31:2). She should be educated in the kind of courage that enables her "not to bow down to anyone, be they well-born, powerful, or even by Zeus, a tyrant" (*Lecture 3*, 5: 29). A woman should, for example, be prepared to stand up to her father if he forbids her to study philosophy (Musonius *Lecture 16*. 7–8: 66). Second, all women must be prepared and able to defend her children; she should "be ready to put up a fight, unless, by Zeus" she doesn't "mind appearing inferior to hens and other female birds, which fight with animals much bigger than they are on behalf of their chicks." Third, women may be called on to participate in "armed conflict," something that the Amazons proved women were perfectly capable of doing. Their example only goes to show, as Plato had also argued, that any absence of this kind of physical courage was more from "lack of practice … than from courage not being an innate quality" of women (*Lecture 4*. 3: 31:2; Nussbaum 2002: 288).[1] In Plato's republic women are schooled in the same military and gymnastic skills as men (*Rep.* 451–2, 135–6), and it is likely that Zeno's republic followed suit (Nussbaum 2002: 288). This latter form of courage is a controversial example given the organization of martial functions in Rome at that time. However, Musonius's rationale is probably strategic here; he wants to bring home the more general point that gendered roles and capacities are constructed, not innate.

Even so, the Roman Stoics were more likely to refer to the importance of courage outside a military context, partly because they wanted to draw attention to the often-overlooked resilience of women. Cicero, for example, "pries courage more or less completely loose from its military roots" making it "a general attitude of despising fortune and withstanding its blows" (Nussbaum 2002: 288). But he also links it to a determination to fight injustice, noting that "[t]he Stoics … correctly define courage" as "that virtue which champions the cause of right" (*De Off.*, I.62: 65). He also associates it with physical daring and toughness, citing the example of Cloelia, a Roman woman who escaped the Etruscans by swimming the Tiber (*De Off.*, I. 61: 65). Seneca likewise praises the plucky Cloelia "who braved both the enemy and the river" (*Ad Marciam,* XV:2–3: 49–50).

For Seneca, there is also the more commonplace but underrated courage of "women who have bravely suffered the loss of dear ones." Seneca points out that he could easily go "door to door to find" such women but they are so plentiful that he can find two examples from just "one family": "the two Cornelias." Marcia is, of course, another signal example of female courage to capture Seneca's attention (*Ad Marciam,* XV:2–3: 49–50), as is Julia Augusta for her "correctness of character…self-restraint" and "moderation" under the seemingly insupportable strains of grief (*Ad Marcium*, III.4: 15).

The Stoics placed particular emphasis on the importance of resisting the power of tyrants, an all too frequent test of courage in ancient times, particularly for the Stoics themselves (Hill, 2005). Women who have the self-control and fortitude to do so are characterized as noble and autonomous [*autarkeia*] (Nussbaum 2002: 288). Yet, mindful of his powerful and conservative audience, Musonius is keen to offer the reassurance that such qualities will by no means disturb the peace of the household or upset its "balance of power" (Nussbaum 2002: 288). The "self-motivated and persevering" qualities of the sagacious woman will most likely be pressed into the service of nursing "at her own breast the children whom she brings forth," serving "her husband with her own hands" and performing "without hesitation tasks which some consider appropriate for slaves"(*Lecture 3*, 5: 29). He persists in even more conventional tones with the suggestion that an educated woman would not be a "brash," "headstrong," or argumentative liability to her husband and family, as some might think, but "a great advantage to the man who has married her, a source of honour for those related to her … and a good example for the women who know her" (*Lecture 3*, 6: 29).

The disappointingly reactionary qualifications to Musonius's feminist agenda here are probably not so much a reflection of his own views (since many of his arguments are radical and he routinely takes sly swipes at the sexism of his time) as recognitions on his part that his conservative Roman audience really needs to be persuaded. This might explain why the interlocutors with whom Musonius and other Stoic writers engage are usually male, a tendency that has understandably caused some to question his feminist credentials (Aiken and McGill-Rutherford 2014; Nussbaum 2000: 237).

Does the Stoic Woman Sage Partake of Political Life or Does She Have to Stay at Home?

It is commonly assumed that in Zeno's republic women are equally eligible for sagehood and the same political responsibilities as men. The same tends to be assumed of Chryssipus (see, for example, Schofield 1991: 43; Grahn-Wilder 2018: 244). Plato before them had argued that since dogs are not assigned different functions on the grounds that bearing and rearing puppies incapacitates them, so too it is irrational to disqualify women from the functions carried out by men (*Rep.* 451, D-E: 135–6). In fact, Plato advocated the use of wet-nurses and creches to relieve Guardian women of the "biological burdens" of motherhood (Pomeroy 1976: 117). Although he agrees that in most "occupations . . . women are weaker than men" (*Rep.* 455d: 140), when Glaucon objects to the idea of women being full guardians Socrates rebukes him by saying that the distribution of jobs and political opportunity according to ability, rather than sex, is a matter of justice; after all, "natural aptitudes are equally distributed" in both sexes (*Rep.* 455d 139–40).

Yet, no Roman Stoic, as far as we know, advocated this degree of affirmative action for women, and generally consigned them to the domestic realm (Hill 2001; Nussbaum 2000; 2002). We have seen that Musonius sells his reader on the idea that women should study philosophy by reassuring "him" that it will make women better wives, mothers and servants of their families, willing to do the work even of slaves (*Lecture 3*, 5: 29). Similarly, in his

tract on *Household Management,* Hierocles explains that the husband's sphere concerns the wider world of "fields, marketplaces, and city business" whereas "to the wife are referred those relating to the spinning of wool, breadmaking, and … domestic tasks." However, he does concede that "one must not think that the one group should be without a taste of the other's tasks" (Hierocles 2009: 93). Meanwhile, Epictetus—rattled by the enthusiasm of Roman women for Plato's notion of community of wives—admonishes them for misinterpreting Plato's intent. On Epictetus's alternative reading, Plato had merely substituted one form of marriage for another (Epictetus, Fragment 15 in *Diss.,* II: 461), a questionable claim given the fleeting and fluid nature of pairings in the former's utopia.

This kind of conservatism about women's proper place is not detected in the earliest—and arguably purest—iterations of Stoicism. Zeno considered marriage and the family as sources of social conflict; therefore, he argued for the effective abolition of both institutions. He proposed a community of wives and husbands in order to put an end to the jealousies and conflicts arising from adultery and the competition for marriage partners (DL VI.72: 75). As D.M. Engel points out, a "cuckolded man cannot be at odds with another man if, by definition, cuckoldry can no longer exist" (Engel 2003: 272). Instead, in the utopias of both Zeno and Chrysippus adults demonstrate equal concern for all children in a given community (Baldry: 155; DL VII.131:235).

The eradication of sexual exclusivity and jealousy has been described as "an essential prop for women's equality" because male "anxiety about paternity" is an "impediment to women's mobility and political functioning" (Nussbaum 2002: 310–11). Susan Moller Okin also sees the community of wives proposal as feministic because the traditional conception of monogamous marriage denotes a husband keeping a "private wife" as a form of "property" (Moller Okin 1977: 349). Abolishing sexual exclusivity was also doubtless motivated by the belief of the early Stoics that sex is a morally indifferent activity (Aiken and McGill-Rutherford 2014: 270), a progressive view that the later Stoics did not hold.

Furthermore, as a step towards sex-equality Zeno "bid men and women wear the same dress," a uniform that would eradicate disunity between the sexes (DL VII. 33: 145; Baldry, 1965: 155). He was undoubtedly inspired by the example of Hipparchia and her husband Crates (Zeno's teacher), who wandered together through the streets of Athens preaching philosophy dressed only in their identical leather cloaks. Zeno believed that people tended to discriminate on the basis of differences in wealth, status, and outward appearance and enjoined the Stoic philosopher to press home the point that these things "are external to the person and are not really the person" (Nussbaum 1994: 334). All these innovations were designed to clear the way for women's training in sagehood.

By contrast, the Roman Stoics promoted marriage and participation in family life to the level of a moral, religious, and patriotic duty in order to address the perceived degeneracy of Roman society. They followed Aristotle in the view that the family is the backbone, not only of the state but the whole "human race" (Musonius *Lecture 14*. 4: 60). Sages are encouraged to follow the example of Socrates and Crates by marrying and rearing children for the sake of the "common good" and in order that the city's population levels may grow (Musonius, *Lecture 14*. 1: 59; 7: 61). Indeed, Musonius strongly suggests that those who fail to marry are bad citizens (*Lecture 14*. 4: 60; 7: 61), while Hierocles opines that the wise should marry because it is a "natural, advantageous and beautiful" institution (Balch 1983). Although the Roman Stoics did not question the justice of the family as an institution, they do make up some important ground in seeking to reform and democratize it. For example, they portray their ideal marriage as not only a union of equal partners but even as a school for the practice and acquisition of nobility, virtue, kindness, moral autonomy and therefore sagehood. Rejecting Aristotle's view that the highest form of love existed between men, Musonius regards the love that exists between marriage partners as of the highest order;

even the search for an appropriate partner is a test of virtue and an opportunity to exercise reasoned choice. Those intent on "finding partners who come from noble families or who have great wealth or beautiful bodies" will find that none of these things "have been able to increase a sense of partnership, let alone increase harmony." Instead we must search for "[s]ouls that are naturally disposed towards self-control and justice—in a word, towards virtue." After all, "[c]ould wicked people be in harmony with each other.… This could not happen any more than a crooked piece of wood could fit together with a similar crooked one" (*Lecture 13.* B.1–2: 58). The authentic marriage must involve "above all, companionship and care of husband and wife for each other, both in sickness and in health." In such a union, "on every occasion" each will "compete to surpass the other in giving such care.… Such a partnership is beautiful" (*Lecture 13.A*. 2: 57).

Despite the gendered sex-roles he endorses, there is no demand on Musonius's part for the subordination of the woman; indeed, his great hope is that women will achieve happiness through self-reliance (Musonius *Lecture 3*: 7, 30) and his general attitude to women is one of egalitarian respect. The family is portrayed as an authentic moral community in its own right composed of a union of devoted companions and their cherished offspring. In similar tones, Seneca tells us in *de Beneficiis* that husbands and wives are subject to equal duties (*On Benefits,* 2.18.1: 85) and he alludes to his own marriage to Paulina as a model marriage of loving friends (Seneca *Ep.* CIV. 2–5: 191–3). Even Epictetus, no cheerleader for conventional marriage (believing it to be an impediment to the philosophical life), reports approvingly on the union of Crates and Hipparchia. This was no "ordinary marriage" but an ideal one, which "arose out of passionate love," mutual consent, and involved a wife "who is herself another Crates" (*Diss.*, III.xxii.81–2: 159). In so saying, Epictetus is implicitly criticizing the conventional marriages of his time with its gendered roles and subordinating tendencies.

The Roman Stoics also demonstrate gender egalitarianism in condemning adultery by both men and women, partly to challenge male hypocrisy concerning infidelity and the sexual exploitation of women. Epictetus says that adultery is unnatural since fidelity is an original human trait. When we "make designs against our neighbour's wife" we are not only "ruining and destroying" our own "fidelity … self-respect" and "piety"; we are also eroding "neighbourly feeling, friendship" and even "the state" (Epictetus *Diss.*, II.iv.1. p. 233–5). Musonius decrees that husbands who commit adultery are just as culpable as wives. In so saying, he challenges the Emperor Augustus who had ruled that it was permissible for aristocratic men to have sexual relations with prostitutes (Pomeroy 1976: 160). Further, it is extremely objectionable for men to have sexual relations with their slave-girls. To those who see no harm in this latter practice, Musonius responds by pointing out the egregious double-standard involved:

> If someone thinks that it is neither shameful nor unnatural for a master to consort with his own female slave, what would he think if his wife would consort with a male slave? Would he not think that this was intolerable?… And yet, no-one will suggest that men should have a lower standard of conduct than women or be less able to discipline their own desires.
>
> (*Lecture 12*, 4–5: 55–6)

Accordingly, Musonius approves of any law that would impose identical penalties on both men and women for the commission of adultery (*Lecture 4,* 2: 31). Seneca agreed on this point: "You know that a man does wrong in requiring chastity of his wife while he himself is intriguing with the wives of other men" (Seneca, *Ep.* XCIV.26: 29).

Different Spheres, Same Virtues?

In spite of all this, the Roman Stoics fall short, at least by contemporary standards. Martha Nussbaum poses the rhetorical question with special reference to Musonius: why does he fail to advocate full citizenship or "criticise the conventions that confine [women] to the domestic sphere. Does this show that his feminism is only skin deep?" (Nussbaum 2000 230). By way of reply, she quite correctly points out that, unlike the Greek Stoics, with their ideal-type, utopian theorizing, the Roman Stoics focused on the lives and characters of real women in their all-too-real conservative society, where power pressed in on virtually everyone on all sides. The Roman Stoics tended to be more practical in their advice because they were often embroiled in the complex and often dangerous machinations of Roman political life (Hill 2000). As Nussbaum surmises, Musonius's "chance of achieving large-scale political change in Nero's Rome is zero, and so he should not be unduly penalised for proposing only what seems feasible." On this reading, the most important thing for Musonius is "having and exercising the virtues," whereas "the sphere of life in which one does this is relatively unimportant." Virtue is always expressed in particular instances. The household duties of women are on a par with the worldly duties of men: both are "deeds for the sake of which arguments should be undertaken, alternative spheres in which virtues can be cultivated, the same virtues for both alike" (Nussbaum 2000: 230–1). As Musonius himself puts it:

> All human affairs have a common basis and are therefore common to both men and women, nothing has been exclusively reserved for either.… Therefore it is with good reason that I think both female and male must be trained in the same way in things pertaining to virtue.
>
> (*Lecture 4*, 6:32–3)

For example, all people should cultivate and exercise courage, but for women this will be commonly manifested in the domestic sphere—in the fulfilment of instantiated, conventional duties like the care and protection of children, as shown above.

Later Stoics did not see gender roles as inconsistent with admission to the *cosmopolis*. After all, Cicero expressly states that we are invested by "Nature" with "two characters": one "that is assigned to individuals in particular" whereas the other is "universal … endowed with reason.… From this [character] all morality and propriety are derived, and upon it depends the rational method of ascertaining our duty." It is quite acceptable, says Cicero, for everyone to "resolutely hold fast to his own peculiar gifts" associated with individual character "so long as they do not interfere with virtue." We must all endeavor to "work to the best advantage in that role to which we are best adapted," and one should maintain those characteristics that are peculiar to one- self as long as they do not stand in the way of virtue (Cicero *De Off.* 1.107: 109; 114: 117). Therefore, as Grahn-Wilder rightly points out, "a sage can be and remain a sage in any social role" (Grahn-Wilder 2018: 195). Similarly, Prudence Allen suggests that the Stoics propose "a sex-unity theory of the virtues in general, but a sex-polarity of the virtues in application" (Allen 1985: 177). In fact, Musonius says that "there is no way that I would expect women who pursue philosophy—or even men, for that matter—to cast aside their appropriate tasks and concern themselves with words only"; rather "they should pursue the discussion they undertake for the sake of actions" (*Lecture 3*, 6: 29–30).

Musonius, Epictetus and Marcus all instruct aspiring sages that the virtue necessary for citizenship of the universal state is not pursued in isolation from the business of everyday

life; rather they advised world-be sages to embrace the contingent identity that Zeus had chosen for them. The moral agent is obliged to serve her community, to do what s/he can to comfort and support family members and to perform diligently any of the citizenship and official duties which happen to befall her (see, for example, Epictetus *Diss.*, 2. 23. 36–40: 417).

On the specific question of whether the institution of marriage is an impediment to the pursuit of sagehood, Musonius composed a lecture on this very topic ("Whether Marriage Gets in the Way of Studying Philosophy"). He points out that "marriage did not hinder Pythagoras or Socrates or Crates," who were all married, and yet "no one could name other philosophers who were better than these" (*Lecture 14*, 1: 59). Musonius then goes even further in suggesting that marriage—and the family it gives rise to—provides the ideal context for an instantiated philosophical education. Contrary to the claims of Zeno and Plato, the family is a school for virtue, "goodness, justice, kindness" and the universal love of "our fellow human beings," a natural institution decreed by the "gods" as appropriate. Marriage and the family are the "proper concerns" of everyone who wishes to "practice philosophy" so that they may have many opportunities to "use reason to determine what actions are seemly and appropriate" (*Lecture 14* passim). In other words, the study of philosophy does not preclude the performance of conventional duties but rather allows such duties to be better performed and practiced. In addition, in performing those duties diligently we are putting courage, wisdom, justice, and self-control into action.

Of course, Musonius—along with most other Roman Stoics—is neglecting to take into account the effects that marriage and the family can have on a woman in real terms. Yet, at the same time, he obviously thought the marriages of his time needed reforming and democratizing. Furthermore, as mentioned, his ideal of marriage is that of Crates, whose highly egalitarian and unconventional marriage to his soulmate in philosophy, Hipparchia, afforded them both great freedom and happiness. Epictetus too strongly endorses this as an ideal marriage (*Diss.*, III.xxii.81–2: 159).

The Most Important Thing of All

Without wanting to justify Roman Stoic conservatism where women's interests are concerned, it should nevertheless be taken into account that all the Stoics consider practical autonomy to be trivial compared to the most important thing under our control: cognitive and moral autonomy. Our natural possession of the one thing that makes each of us essentially human is the capacity for moral apprehension, choice, and justice. As Epictetus says, "the gods have put under our control only the most excellent faculty of all and that which dominates the rest, namely, the power to make correct use of external impressions" (Epictetus *Diss.*, I.1.7; IV.4.29). This power of perception and choice, the capacity to give or withhold assent, is "the finest and most important matter" to concern humans (Epictetus Fragment 4 in *Diss.*: 445). The worst state of all is moral slavery, which is slavery of the soul or the mind, rather than the legal slavery that could fairly accurately describe the lives of many Roman women. Epictetus urges that we adopt indifference towards the latter and any external factors over which we have no control, while avoiding slavery as an internal condition of moral inferiority (Epictetus *Diss.*, IV.1.76–79). The best way to avoid moral slavery is through an education. As Epictetus puts it so well: "we should not trust the multitude who say: 'Only the free can be educated,' but rather the philosophers who say '[o]nly the educated are free'" (Epictetus *Diss.*, II.1.22–4: 219).

Therefore, although their reactionary attitude to gendered social institutions is disappointing, the Roman Stoics themselves did not see it as a deal-breaking constraint on women's ability to pursue sagehood because autonomy is more of an internal state. It is regrettable that they fail to appreciate the "extent to which human dignity and self-respect require support from the social world" (Nussbaum 2000: 231), and also that their goal of *autarkeia* or self-sufficiency might be seriously circumscribed in practice by gendered practices and institutions (Aiken and McGill-Rutherford 2014: 15). However, it should not be overlooked that the Stoic insistence that reason is universal is extremely inclusive and egalitarian, not only because it assumes that women are the intellectual and spiritual equals of men, but also because it entitles women to enjoy a right to what the Stoics themselves regard as the most important social good of all: a philosophical education. Such an education, in turn, qualifies women for what Stoics consider to be the most desirable state of all: moral and cognitive autonomy. As a consequence, this renders them eligible for the highest possible status: sagehood.

The Stoics make up some considerable feministic ground in one further way: the impression that Plato was a more thoroughgoing feminist than the Stoics is deceptive because not only are only a limited number of "superior" women admitted to Plato's guardian class, but his motives for including women in the ruling class were strictly utilitarian in the first place; that is to say, he had no interest in whether or not doing so would be of any benefit to them (Annas 1996: 4). And yet, a genuinely feminist politics or theory should have gender equality as its explicit goal "and not just produce it as an arbitrary by-product" (Grahn-Wilder 2018: 145). By contrast, the Stoics make clear that "the doctrine of the philosophers encourages a woman to be happy and to rely on herself" (Musonius *Lecture 3*: 7, 30; Seneca *Ep.* 44.6: 291; Zeno in DL VII.89: 197).

Conclusion

Despite the conservatism and sometimes reactionary tone of Roman Stoic attitudes to women, they were radical in stipulating that women were as qualified as men for sagehood. If we read between the lines of Musonius's text, we detect a cunning feminist strategist at work, playing up to Roman prejudice and sexism yet all the while quietly subverting it and even requiring women to defy men who might stand in their way. Less progressive Stoics such as Cicero, Seneca, Marcus, and Epictetus also chip away at the particularism, double-standards, and sexism that kept women subordinate in their time; in addition, all challenged the prevailing chauvinism that denied the equal right of every human being to enter the *cosmopolis*.

Note

1 Although Musonius relegates women to the domestic sphere he betrays here an underlying radicalism and what I suspect is his authentic view: that women should be admitted to all spheres of life. This is also reflected in the fact that he also encourages women to defy those who would prevent them from being educated (see below).

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34

EPICUREAN ADVICE FOR THE MODERN CONSUMER

Tim O'Keefe

For the Epicureans, the point of doing philosophy is to drive out the diseases of the mind that prevent us from achieving happiness. (Porphyry *To Marcella* 3) Like all other animals, humans seek pleasure and shun pain, but we do so in misguided ways. Epicurean therapy aims at diagnosing and removing the false beliefs and foolish desires that bring us misery.

Epicurus thought that the conventional values of Greek society—in particular, its celebration of luxury and wealth—often led people astray. It is by rejecting these values, reducing our desires, and leading a moderately ascetic life that we can attain happiness. Epicurus' message was not meant only for his Greek compatriots, however, but for all people. And it is especially pertinent for those of us in modern Western culture, with an economy based on constant consumption and an advertising industry that molds us to serve that economy by enlarging our desires.

In this chapter, I'll start by outlining some of the basic tenets of Epicurean ethics. Then I will explain how these tenets lead to an Epicurean diagnosis of what ails modern consumers and present the cure they would propose. Finally, I will argue that the Epicurean position is supported by recent psychological research in well-being.

Happiness and Types of Pleasure[1]

Like almost all ancient ethicists, Epicurus is a eudaimonist, holding that the highest good is *eudaimonia*, or happiness. He is also a hedonist, because he identifies the happy life with the pleasant life: only pleasure is intrinsically good, and only pain intrinsically bad (*De Fin*. 1.30). But Epicureanism is a form of *prudent* hedonism, of intelligently picking and choosing among pleasures and pains in order to make one's life as a whole pleasant. Shooting up heroin and punching out people who annoy you may feel pleasant, but they lead to opioid addiction and jail, and so the wise person avoids them (*Ep. Men.* 129–130). Epicurus' denunciation of luxury, however, is not based merely upon common-sense observations such as that overindulgence in wine leads to a hangover. Instead, it is rooted in his idiosyncratic analysis of types of pleasure and of types of desire.

Epicurus first distinguishes between bodily and mental pleasures and pains. Bodily pleasures and pains are confined to the present, in the sense that they arise only from the present state of the body, such as the feeling of hunger or the agony of being kicked in the shins by somebody wearing Doc Martens. Mental pleasures and pains, however, are not

confined to the present, but can arise from the recollection or anticipation of pleasures and pains. If you train yourself to recall sweet memories, you will always have pleasure available to you (*De Fin*. 1.57). And if my Doc Martens-wearing student credibly threatens to gather his friends and give me a beatdown because I failed him, my anxiety at the prospect of the beatdown may cause me more pain than the beatdown itself. For the sake of leading a happy life, Epicurus thinks that mental pleasures and pains are more important than bodily pleasures and pains (*De Fin*. 1.55).

Most people identify pleasure with some active titillation of the senses or the mind, like the sensation of eating a hamburger when hungry or the delight in recalling time with your friends. Epicurus labels these sorts of pleasures "kinetic" pleasures. But Epicurus holds that there is another type of pleasure: the absence of pain is not merely a neutral state between pleasure and pain, but is itself pleasurable. When I am hungry, the hunger is painful, and I enjoy eating a hamburger as I am relieving my hunger. But afterwards, my bodily state of not being in want or need is itself pleasurable. That is because absence of distress is something we rejoice at, and hence a sort of pleasure (*De Fin*. 1.37). In fact, the removal of all pain is the limit of pleasure (*KD* 3), and once we reach this state of "static" pleasure, our pleasure can be varied but not increased (*KD* 18). Specifically, "static" pleasures come in two varieties. The first is bodily static pleasure [*aponia*], not being hungry, thirsty, cold, etc. The second is mental static pleasure (*ataraxia*, or tranquility), not being anxious, fearful, full of regret, etc. Both are good, but as a mental pleasure, *ataraxia* is by far more important. This is illustrated by a letter Epicurus wrote as he was dying: he suffered great physical pain in his last days, but he was able to counterbalance his physical suffering with the joy he felt at recalling his past philosophical conversations. He did not fear his impending death, he was able to look back on his life with gratitude, and so he called himself supremely happy (DL 10.22). So, while Epicureanism is a form of hedonism, Epicurus ends up recommending that we should aim at attaining peace of mind, because peace of mind is what really makes our life pleasant.

The Life of Luxury vs. the Life of Happiness

What determines whether you reach this state of tranquility is the sort of person you are, whether you are virtuous or vicious, and an important part of being a virtuous person is having the right desires. So, to attain virtue, we need to have a correct understanding of what types of desires there are and how we should handle them.

Some desires, like the desires for food, drink, and shelter, are natural and necessary. They are natural in the sense that human beings congenitally have them rather than learning them from society, and they are necessary in that fulfilling them is needed either to live at all or to free the body from troubles (*Ep. Men.* 127). If I do not eat or drink, I will soon die, and while I may live for some time without adequate clothing or shelter, I will be cold and miserable. Fulfilling these desires liberates us from pain (scholion to *KD* 29), and so we should strive to fulfill these desires and to arrange our lives so that can we be confident that they will be fulfilled. When we fulfill these desires, we have *aponia*, the limit of bodily pleasure, and when we are confident about the future, it brings us *ataraxia*, the limit of mental pleasure. Fortunately for us, these desires are naturally limited and easy to fulfill (*KD* 21, *SV* 59). Rice and beans will fill your belly and keep you healthy, water will keep you hydrated, and simple clothing and shelter are enough to protect you from the elements. The wise person will also be part of a network of trustworthy friends, who all agree to look out for one another and help each other through any tough times that might arise (*De Fin*. 1.65–70).[2]

Unfortunately, we live in a society that encourages us to want more than the basics: we crave meat, expensive wine, designer jeans, and a McMansion. Epicurus labels these sorts of desires "natural and unnecessary." They are natural insofar as desiring food, hydration, and shelter are natural—but we do not *need* these particular things, so they are unnecessary. Meat or expensive wine are not needed to maintain our life or to avoid bodily pain. Eating meat and drinking wine vary our pleasure—we have a different sort of pleasant experience when eating filet mignon than when eating rice and beans—but because we reach the limit of bodily pleasure when we attain the healthy state of not being in want or need, they do not *increase* our pleasure (Porphyry, *De Ab.* 1.51; *KD* 26).

The Epicureans' attitude towards such desires is ambivalent, but more negative than positive. On the one hand, they do not advocate anything approaching a total ban on indulging in luxury. The wise person, who needs extravagance least of all, will be able to enjoy extravagance the most when it happens to come along (*Ep. Men.* 130–1). In a letter, Epicurus asks a friend to send him a small pot of cheese, so that he may enjoy a feast (DL 10.11). And when he was about to die, Epicurus requested some unmixed wine, tossed it back, asked his friends to remember his teachings, and died (DL 10.15–16). Epicurus says we should not "force" nature, but "persuade" her, and this involves fulfilling the natural but unnecessary desires, as long as fulfilling them does not harm us (*SV* 21). Furthermore, while fulfilling these desires isn't necessary, they should be easy to dispel if we realize that achieving them would be difficult or harmful (*KD* 26).

These passages suggest a rather permissive attitude towards luxury. If I happen to like fine Thai food, and a friend comes by with some Tom Yum soup, there is no reason not to have some, as long as it doesn't harm my health. If it turns out that the soup is bad for my cholesterol level, or if there isn't any Tom Yum soup nearby, I should be able to let go of my hankering for it.

But Epicurus is well aware that things don't always work out that way. We do not simply *decide* that a simple life is enough for our needs and thereby find a simple life satisfying. We must become *accustomed* to a simple way of life (*Ep. Men.* 131), and we can likewise become accustomed to an extravagant way of life. We can also acquire false beliefs about such desires, and then they might be hard to dispel, even when they are hard to fulfill (*KD* 30). For instance, imagine that I become accustomed to nice Thai food, and I come to believe that eating fancy food is part of the good life. Then, when I accept the only tenure-track job I am offered in rural west-central Minnesota, I will be dissatisfied with my new life. The closest decent Thai restaurant is over an hour drive away, and the local supermarket does not carry the ingredients needed to cook the dishes I like. As I sit in the local diner with my colleagues, eating scrambled eggs and undercooked hash browns, I curse west-central Minnesota. Hearing my lamentations, Epicurus would chastise me: there is nothing inherently wrong with the area I am living in. After all, many people live there perfectly happily. Instead, there is something wrong with *me*: I have outsized desires that keep me from being satisfied, and I need to change myself if I want to be happy.

These sorts of desires, that are based upon false beliefs that we acquire from our culture, Epicurus labels vain and empty desires, and they must be eliminated. (This suggests that the desire for particular sorts of food and other goods can be either natural and unnecessary, or vain and empty, depending on whether the desire is associated with a false and harmful belief that makes it difficult to eliminate.[3]) Vain and empty desires are difficult to fulfill, and when they are not fulfilled, this makes me unhappy. And even if I am able to fulfill them, they will still make me unhappy, because I will be anxious that in the future they might not be fulfilled, ruining my peace of mind.[4]

Furthermore, consumer goods are often valued as "positional goods," where the point is not simply to have the good for its own sake, but in order to have more than other people. For instance, if I buy a fancy sports car, I probably do so not only because I crave the buttery feel of the leather seats on my thighs, the excellent acceleration, and the nimble handling as I weave in and out of traffic on the interstate. Instead, I want to think to myself, and for other people to know, that *I can afford a fancy sports car*, as they trundle down the road in their Honda Accords. (Veblen 1899 remains the classic study of such "conspicuous consumption.") This sort of desire would be like the desires for fame and political power, which Epicurus condemns because they have no natural limit and bring us into conflict with others. If I want to signal my social status, there will always be somebody with an even more expensive car, or perhaps a fleet of them, to make me feel small. So, to pursue such desires is a losing proposition.

It might be objected that the Epicurean lifestyle—repeated meals of rice and beans, with the occasional hunk of cheese to spice things up—would be bland and boring. If it seems that way to you, Epicurus would reply that you're a fool who needs deprogramming from our culture's values. You should be happy that you live in a time and place where you can easily obtain the necessities of life, which many people have difficulty obtaining. Ingratitude is what makes people greedy for unlimited variation in their lifestyle (*SV* 69).[5] With the right mindset, you can be happy with little. And in any case, there are many other things to occupy the time of a person who follows Epicurus' recommendations, such as interacting with friends, enjoying the wonders of the natural world, and studying philosophy.

Money

Obviously, the pursuit of wealth is central to modern consumer culture, and the Epicureans have thought long and hard about the role money should play in obtaining happiness. Just as with the natural but unnecessary desires, their attitude is ambivalent.

Because of her reduced desires, the wise Epicurean will not need great wealth, and her recognition of the natural limits of her desires will bring her temperance and the other virtues. Seneca reports that Epicurus boasted that he could be fed for less than an obol but that his disciple Metrodorus, who hadn't made as much progress, needed an entire obol (*Ep.* 18.9). But it makes sense to ensure that you have some money, so that you can obtain the food and shelter your body requires and don't need to worry about hunger, thirst, and exposure to the elements. Although most of us suffer from the opposite problem, it is possible to be *too* frugal (*SV* 63). The Epicurean Metrodorus criticizes the Cynics, an ancient philosophical movement that also condemns conventional attitudes towards wealth, but who advocate heedlessly living in poverty so as to avoid the trouble that comes with pursuing wealth. Such an attitude is foolish, says Metrodorus, because you occasionally have to do things that are a little annoying in order to avoid greater pain in the future, as in the case of bodily health, where small hassles like making sure to brush your teeth nightly and picking up a new tube of toothpaste occasionally are worth it to avoid the pain of rotting teeth. Wealth, says Metrodorus, is like health: it's prudent to expend some effort to have the resources to satisfy your natural and necessary desires (*De Oeconomia* [*De Oec.*] XIII 1–15). Such limited "natural wealth" is easy to obtain and is worth pursuing, whereas wealth as defined by popular opinion has no limit (*KD* 15).

The Epicureans' admission that the wise person will pursue wealth in order to face the future with confidence may seem to open the door for pursuing great wealth. After all, if saving up $10,000 helps me know that I can afford my food and rent for the next year, wouldn't $1,000,000 in savings be even better, because that would be enough to provide

for my needs for the rest of my life, even if things go seriously awry? But Epicurus denies that the wise person would have great wealth: the happy life is free, and it's hard to obtain great wealth without becoming enslaved to the mob or to people who have power. And if the wise person did somehow luck into great wealth, he'd share it out to obtain the goodwill of his neighbors (*SV* 67).

The later Epicurean Philodemus adds to this that there is a skill whose aim is accumulating and managing wealth: *oikonomia*, or the craft of property management. But if you dedicate yourself to developing this skill, it will make you worse as a human being. You will worry about maximizing your wealth, turning yourself into a money-lover (*De Oec.* XVII 13). Eagerly watching over your possessions at all times is troubling and worrisome (*De Oec.* XIX 10–16), and wanting to increase your property as much as possible makes you agonize over your losses (*De Oec.* XIV 30–37). The wise person realizes that she needs little to live well, and that even if hard times befall her, she can count on her friends to come to her aid. So, she won't be obsessed with maximizing her wealth, and she won't be distressed when she loses some wealth (*De Oec.* XIV 23–30). That doesn't mean she'll be totally ignorant about financial matters or that she'll foolishly waste her property: she'll have a good-enough know-how, easily developed through common experience, that lets her get by financially (*De Oec.* XVI 35–39).[6]

The Epicurean Cure

The Epicureans would diagnose modern consumers as suffering from wanting things they don't really need, falsely believing that these things are good for them, and excessively pursuing money in order to gratify these desires. This affliction leads them to anxiety and to dissatisfaction with what they do have. What is their proposed cure?

The first step is to accept the diagnosis: you need to change who you are in order to achieve the life that you really want. The Epicureans are optimistic about the power of reason to shape our character. Practical wisdom is the source of all of the other virtues (*Ep. Men.* 132). Practical wisdom is a matter of knowing what's truly good and evil, understanding the natural limits of our desires, and being able to weigh the consequences of possible courses of action in order to discern what you should do in every situation, and the other virtues come about through calculating what's in your self-interest (DL 10.120).

But, of course, accepting the Epicurean position in general terms is not going to instantly transform your character. For one thing, the Epicureans are well aware that people can have inconsistent beliefs. For instance, the Epicurean poet Lucretius describes a man who believes that death is annihilation, but whose horror at the thought of his corpse being torn limb from limb by a pack of wild dogs shows that he still has some unacknowledged belief that a part of him survives his death (*DRN* 3.870–893). Philodemus' arguments about the fear of death also show a sensitivity to inconsistent beliefs. The Epicureans have some general all-purpose arguments that are supposed to show that death is not bad for the person who dies. (Briefly: death cannot be bad for the living person because it has not yet occurred, and it cannot be bad for the dead person because dead people don't exist and thus cannot be harmed.[7]) But Philodemus goes on to address many particular forms of the fear of death, for example, fear of death at sea. (He says that death at sea is not particularly bad, because you can equally well drown in a bathtub, and having your body devoured by fish is no worse than by maggots and grubs.) If the general argument is accepted, it would seem to make addressing the particular fear unnecessary—but people can inconsistently believe both that death (in general) is not bad and that death at sea (in particular) is bad, so Philodemus gives both the general and specific arguments.[8]

The same thing holds with our desires for luxury and wealth. Epicurus thinks that you need to understand yourself in order to achieve happiness, and to ask of every desire that you have, what will happen if you achieve the object of your desire, and what will happen if you don't (*SV* 71)? This will hopefully lead you to conclude, for instance, that not having the fancy sports car wouldn't be so bad, even if having one might be slightly more convenient and comfortable.

Once we have identified the bad habits that harm us, we must eliminate them (*SV* 46). As noted above, this involves starting to work at living the simple life, so that you become accustomed to it. What helps a lot here is putting yourself in a healthy environment that encourages simple living. Epicurus himself did not merely spell out a philosophy that talked about the way the world was, how we could gain knowledge of the world, and how to live so as to attain happiness. Instead, Epicurus founded a philosophical community, the Garden, where people lived together in order to put his precepts into action, and later Epicureans formed similar communities throughout the Greek and Latin-speaking world.

Teachers in these communities helped their pupils develop the virtues, and this help was not limited to philosophical argumentation. Philodemus notes that sometimes imagery is more effective then argumentation in treating a person who suffers from destructive passions or appetites: a person prone to harmful bouts of anger may not appreciate how badly off they are if their philosophical "doctor" merely reasons with them about the effects of anger, whereas if the doctor brings the badness of anger before their eyes via a vivid depiction of its effects, he will make them eager to be treated.[9] But imagery can also foster destructive desires. Advertising does not give arguments in favor of buying a sports car or lite beer; it shows a successful, debonair man tooling down the road, or witty, sexually attractive people eyeing each other, each with a beer in their hand. It is going to be difficult to reduce your desires if you are constantly bombarded with these images and you're surrounded by co-workers who talk about their latest home renovations and the size of their annual bonuses.

Finally, you should develop a circle of friends you can count on, and you do this by being a good, reliable friend yourself. As noted above, the Epicureans think that friendship allows you to face the future with confidence. Epicurus admits that wealth can bring you *some* security (*KD* 14), but pursuing great wealth ultimately causes us more trouble, and it cannot bring us peace of mind (*SV* 81). By removing fear of the future, friendship undercuts one of the main motives for accumulating wealth.

It might be objected that if everyone (or even most people) accepted the cure and became Epicureans, this would have a detrimental impact on society. When consumer spending goes down significantly, this leads to a recession or depression and all of the resulting hardship. A world of Epicureans would certainly put an end to the highly productive economy that has pulled many people across the globe out of dire poverty. Greed is not good, but it sure is an effective motivator.

The Epicureans would give a two-fold response. First of all, if I and some of my friends decide to opt out of modern consumer culture, it's not as if that will tank the national or global economy. There are, and will continue to be, plenty of foolish people. To deliberately make myself miserable and ruin the one life I have because capitalism requires people to be greedy in order to function would be profoundly stupid. Let other people take the hit, if that's true.

Second, they would deny that a world full of Epicureans would be an economic disaster. The Epicurean Diogenes of Oinoanda writes that, if all people were to become wise, humans would achieve the life of the gods. They would not need laws or punishments to restrain one another from hurting each other, and being rational, they would freely

cooperate in performing the activities, such as farming, needed to feed them all and fulfill the other natural and necessary desires (Diogenes of Oinoanda fr. 56). There would far less stuff in the ideal Epicurean community, but everyone would have enough to satisfy their needs.

Psychological Research Supporting the Epicurean Advice

Recent decades have seen a proliferation of "happiness studies" in psychology, where "happiness" is usually equated with "subjective well-being" and often measured by asking people how satisfied they are with their lives or with specific life-domains. Self-reports of life satisfaction have methodological and philosophical limitations: people may be self-deceived or dishonest in their reports, their reports may be influenced by extraneous factors, and we should not, without further argument, conclude from the fact that people *believe* their lives are satisfactory that they *are* going well.[10] Nonetheless, we can use these results as a rough proxy for the sort of happiness Epicurus was interested in: generally, people who are suffering from fear, anxiety, and regret would report that they're dissatisfied with their lives, while people who are able to get what they want, are confident that they will continue to do so, and thus feel tranquility would report that they are satisfied with their lives. These studies provide support for both the Epicurean diagnosis and cure of the modern consumer.

An important recent research topic is materialism, which is defined as an ideology with three core tenets: "1) material possessions lead to happiness; 2) success is best defined in material terms; and 3) acquisition of material goods is central" (Richins and Dawson 1992: 303). This is strikingly akin to Epicurus' characterization of people who have acquired false beliefs that various luxury goods are necessary for happiness, moving their desires for these goods from being natural but unnecessary desires to vain and empty desires. Numerous studies have established a negative correlation between materialism and happiness. (See Dittmar et al. 2014 for a recent meta-analysis, and Kasser 2018 for an overview of the literature.)

That materialism is negatively correlated with well-being is clear, but *why* it is isn't. One suggestion with considerable empirical support, however, is that materialistic values conflict with community-oriented values that require generosity and cooperation with others and thus make it more difficult to live together with other people. (Kasser 2018 and Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002) Recent research has also supported Epicurus' ideas on gratitude. Gratitude and materialism are negatively correlated, and gratitude is a cause of happiness (Polak and McCullough 2006). Furthermore, test subjects who were experimentally induced to feel gratitude felt greater satisfaction with life and this in turn resulted in lower materialism. (Lambert et al. 2009) This is a short-term effect, but it suggests that more concentrated efforts to develop a deep-seated disposition to feel gratitude towards the good things in your life should decrease your materialism.

The Epicureans hold that the limited "natural wealth" needed to obtain the necessities of life is beneficial but that unlimited wealth as defined by popular opinion is not. Research has shown that the wealth of a nation and its level of subjective well-being are positively correlated. However, this correlation holds mostly when comparing nations where the level of poverty means that many people have difficulty obtaining the necessities of life to developed nations where most people are able to do so. Within countries, the correlation between wealth and subjective well-being is small, especially once one moves above the poorest group. Finally, in the most economically developed nations, economic growth has not led to appreciable increase in subjective well-being. Summarizing the upshot of these studies, Diener and Biswas-Diener (2002: 119) write, "more money may enhance SWB [subjective well-being] when it means avoiding poverty and living in a developed nation,

but income appears to increase SWB little over the long-term when more of it is gained by well-off individuals." They also note that these findings are compatible with two theories: either that money increases happiness i) only to the extent that it fulfills a person's basic needs, or ii) to the extent that it satisfies a person's desires (since people's desires often increase as they acquire more wealth). Either theory would be grist for the Epicureans' mill. If the first is true, then seeking wealth beyond the "natural wealth" needed for our basic needs would be misguided. And even if the second is true, dedicating yourself to acquiring more wealth to satisfy your desires would be misguided. That's because valuing wealth brings unhappiness, as the research on materialism shows, and so the smart play is to reduce your desires so that they are easily satisfied with little money rather than pursuing money to satisfy your outsized desires.

One of the main Epicurean methods for ridding ourselves of outsized desires is to acquire self-knowledge—to examine our beliefs, desires, and ways of life, and to see how they often lead us into distress and prevent us from getting what we really want. This is, broadly speaking, similar to cognitive-behavioral therapy, whose "defining feature … is the proposition that symptoms and dysfunctional behaviors are often cognitively mediated and, hence, improvement can be produced by modifying dysfunctional thinking and beliefs" (Butler et al. 2006: 19). The effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy is well-established. Butler et al. conducted a review of the meta-analyses and concluded that cognitive-behavioral therapy is effective, and often more effective than alternative treatments, for a wide variety of disorders, such as depression, generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social phobia.

The Epicureans would also recommend putting ourselves in healthy environments and avoiding unhealthy environments, and warn that contemporary consumer culture is extremely unhealthy—a warning borne out by the research. Watching more television and consuming more advertising leads to more materialism (Kasser 2016), and increases in advertising expenditures within a country have been shown to be followed by significant declines in reported levels of life-satisfaction. (Michel et al. 2019) Increased Facebook usage is associated with decreased physical health, decreased mental health, decreased life-satisfaction, and increased Body-Mass Index. (Shakya and Christakis 2017) Why exactly social media makes you unhappy has not been decisively established, but two hypotheses are that on-line interaction detracts from face-to-face interactions, and that viewing the carefully curated life-stories of our "friends" on Facebook leads us to be dissatisfied with our own humdrum and wart-filled lives.

Conclusion

Epicurus thought that his fellow Greeks lived in a sick society that valued the wrong things, and his message is, if anything, even more applicable to us in modern consumer culture. We live in a society that encourages us to increase our desires without limit so that we can serve the economy, rather than having an economy designed to serve us. The point of seeing through our society's materialist ideology is not to look down on other people. If we don't share his desire, it may be easy to laugh at a middle-aged academic with gold chains and a hankering for a fancy sports car with plush leather seats. But Epicurus would say that almost nobody in modern Western culture is completely healthy, and we all have similarly foolish desires, whether it be for gourmet food, kitchen gadgets, bleeding-edge electronic equipment, high-end hobby gear, or something else. If we want to be happy, we need to reject our culture's values and reduce our desires so that, along with our friends, we can be content with the little we need.

Notes

1 Some material in this chapter is adapted from O'Keefe 2016, O'Keefe forthcoming-a, and O'Keefe forthcoming-b.
2 For a detailed discussion of the taxonomy of Epicurean desires, see Rider's chapter in this volume, "Epicureans on Pleasure, Desire, and Happiness."
3 For more on this topic, see Annas 1993: 191–3 and O'Keefe forthcoming-a.
4 For more on what exactly the Epicurean attitude is towards natural and unnecessary desires, see Rider 2019: 1099–105 and Cooper 1999: 498–508, who give relatively permissive interpretations, and Mitsis 1988: 11–58 and O'Keefe 2010: 124–7, who give relatively suspicious interpretations.
5 See Rider 2019 for more on the place of gratitude in Epicurean ethics.
6 See O'Keefe 2016 for more on natural wealth and Philodemus' thoughts on the craft of property management.
7 For more on this, see Austin's chapter in this volume, "Epicurus on Sense-Experience and the Fear of Death."
8 For more on Philodemus on death, see Tsouna 2007 Chapter 10, pp. 239–311.
9 *De ira* IV 4–19. For more on this technique, see Tsouna 2007: 204–9, and more generally on Philodemus' treatise *On Anger*, pp. 195–238.
10 See Chapter 5 of Haybron 2008: 79–103 for further elaboration of some of these limitations.

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35

HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE ORIGINS OF MODERN ECONOMIC THOUGHT

Phillip Mitsis

It has become increasingly clear that many areas of Enlightenment thought were deeply influenced by Hellenistic philosophy. Indeed, an impressive array of early modern thinkers seemed to have consciously returned to Hellenistic philosophical arguments for direction and impetus in combatting centuries of Platonic and Aristotelian ascendancy. Questions about natural philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political theory—all were debated and formulated by thinkers such as Gassendi, Locke, Bayle, Shaftesbury, and Rousseau with a close eye to Stoic, Epicurean and Skeptic philosophical arguments. In standard histories of economic thought, however, Hellenistic philosophy has rarely been given much notice,[1] and among the many reasons for this, I will mention two, perhaps, of the most salient. Economic historians for many decades were for the most part swayed by Joseph Schumpeter's magisterial and widely influential *History of Economic Analysis* (1953) whose account moved directly from Aristotle to Rome[2]—with even the latter being seen as having perhaps only contributed some influences through enduring legal structures and norms, but characterized itself by an overall lack of "analytical analysis." In some sense, Schumpeter was merely reflecting traditions prevalent in the scholarship in other areas of the history of thought that had been strongly influenced by Hegel's dismissive view of Hellenistic philosophy. Although recent work by scholars of Hellenistic philosophy[3] has been filling this particular gap, a connected worry one might raise concerns the extent of Enlightenment thinkers' knowledge of the economic thought of the Hellenistic period. For instance, they did not have access to works that have only recently been reconstructed, such as Philodemus' *On Property Management,* [4] and that are now allowing scholars to form a much more detailed impression of Hellenistic economic thinking. So even if Hellenistic thinkers had made significant economic arguments, one might plausibly wonder whether early modern economic thinkers were in any position to view the Hellenistic period as presenting anything other than a gap.

A second important reason for the ghostly presence of Hellenistic philosophy in economic histories is a larger contextual one. However much other disciplines have difficulties in drawing a line between "modernity" and what went before it,[5] economic historians are typically fairly confident in drawing a sharp line in the late fifteenth century when Europe began its transformation from an agrarian to a market economy, in part driven by overseas expansion and global maritime trade, by the development of banking, and by the seemingly

relentless march of capitalism. Along with these economic transformations came a new conception of *homo mercator* and the emergence of economics itself as *une science nouvelle*. Surely ancient philosophers, the argument goes, had never been faced with the task of explaining such wholesale economic transformations, so how could their theories be of any use to early modern thinkers and a discipline faced with understanding massive new developments and formulating arguments to cope with them?

All of these are important concerns and obviously raise questions too large to begin to address fully here. But in order to get a sense of how one might go about assessing what is by any stretch of the imagination not merely a ghostly presence of Hellenistic philosophy in the economic thought of the period, it might be useful to first sketch, if only in outline, a few paradigmatic instances in which early modern thinkers apparently took it for granted that Hellenistic philosophers were addressing economic problems they also were facing. This frequently occurred at a more general level, certainly, but also at a more fine-grained level of analyses of trade, markets, division of labor, scarcity, value, etc. Given the well-known difficulties in proving direct intellectual influence between thinkers of different historical periods, however, I will be limiting my discussion here to the claim that there are significant thematic parallels between Hellenistic and Enlightenment economic arguments and that later thinkers made use of Hellenistic philosophers or alluded to their doctrines in relevantly similar argumentative contexts. To my mind, such evidence arguably goes some way in showing that one can posit channels of influence between Hellenistic and Enlightenment thinkers on economic questions that perhaps parallel the now readily acknowledged influence of Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics in almost all other areas of Enlightenment philosophy. The great majority of economic historians, however, have so far mostly been interested in looking forward from early modern economic texts in order to show how they prefigure important later economic theories. My argument will therefore be more of an antithetical exercise in looking backward in order to show something of the pre-history of Enlightenment economic doctrines. The hope is that this may help to begin widening our understanding of the overall intellectual context of the origins and development of modern economic thought and the role that Hellenistic philosophy played in it.

Before turning to more general questions about the nature and range of Hellenistic influence, it might be useful, by way of illustration, to begin by looking at one central and well-known economic question and to see just a few of the ways that early modern discussions of it were entangled with earlier Stoic, Epicurean, and Skeptic texts. However incomplete and partial, since one might do much the same with any number of other economic arguments, this kind of historical excavation should at least begin to raise some red flags about autochthonous accounts of the origins of modern economic ideas.

To begin with a rather familiar case in point, anyone who has taken an introductory economics course, I imagine, is likely to remember, even if dimly, Adam Smith's famous diamond-water paradox, or the so-called paradox of value:

> What are the rules which men naturally observe in exchanging them (goods) for money or for one another, I shall now proceed to examine. These rules determine what may be called the relative or exchangeable value of goods. The word VALUE, it is to be observed, has two different meanings, and sometimes expresses the utility of some particular object, and sometimes the power of purchasing other goods which the possession of that object conveys. The one may be called "value in use" the other, "value in exchange." The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange; on the contrary, those which have the greatest value in exchange have frequently little or no value in use.

> Nothing is more useful than water: but it will purchase scarcely anything; scarcely anything can be had in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has scarcely any use-value; but a very great quantity of other goods may frequently be had in exchange for it.
>
> (Smith 1776)

Smith uses this example as an important cog in his overall argument that something's value in exchange is determined by the amount of labor required to acquire it—his so-called labor theory of value—as well as to support his denial that there is any necessary relation between price and utility. Though economic textbooks often lend this argument an aura of foundational importance on par, with, say, Descartes grappling with the evil demon in his study, it actually was much more a matter of *creatio ex materia* than of *ex nihilo* on Smith's part.[6] For present purposes, it is worth looking further at these sources, since Smith's economic theory has not attracted the same kind of attention as that of his moral theory from those interested in his Hellenistic and Roman influences.[7]

Smith, like many British thinkers in the tradition of Locke onwards, was extremely sparing in acknowledging his intellectual debts both old and new, so it is often a hard and controversial task to isolate them. Accordingly, I think Hellenistic traces will prove less elusive if we first turn to an earlier iteration of this problem in a thinker who is much more forthcoming about his immersion in ancient, and especially Hellenistic, philosophical thought, Ferdinando Galiani. Many scholars have thought that Smith surely must have been acquainted with Galiani's work, given its fame and circulation, and also sometimes have implied that Smith looms much larger in the history of economics than Galiani for reasons other than his actual original contributions. Certainly, in his own time, Galiani's fame was more prominent. But to set the stage a bit, the Abbé Galiani (1728–1787) was a major economic thinker of the Italian Enlightenment whose writings appeared a few decades earlier than those of Adam Smith. His *De Moneta* (1751) is a work that arguably presents, along with innovative accounts of the nature and circulation of money, the most important "modern" observations on the theory of value that anticipate conceptions of marginal utility and opportunity costs developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Einaudi 1953). Known to his contemporaries as "The Epicurean," the Abbé Galiani was among the most well-known and influential European intellectuals of the 18th century, indeed prominent enough to draw Nietzsche's ire and envy, as witnessed in the following comment from *Beyond Good and Evil* which describes Galiani in characteristically extravagant terms: "where by a freak of nature, genius is bound to some such indiscreet billy-goat and ape, as in the case of the Abbé Galiani, the profoundest, acutest, and perhaps also filthiest man of his century" (Nietzsche 1886). Steeped in Classical texts, he produced in this deep youth a biography of Horace based on evidence in the poems. Soon after, in his early twenties, he wrote his groundbreaking *De Moneta* while also translating Locke's influential treatise "Some Considerations on the Consequences of Lowering the Interest and Raising the Value of Money" (1691)—a work that among other things, shows Locke's awareness of Cicero's arguments in the *Letters to Atticus* on the problems of Brutus' loans in Cilicia and Roman demands for a 48 percent interest rate.[8]

Our passage occurs in the second chapter of the first book of *De Moneta* in the context of Galiani's examination of the relation between utility [*utilita*] and scarcity [rarita], and more particularly, of price in relation to the distribution of talents and the corresponding division of labor based upon them:

> It is thus not utility by itself that controls prices because God causes people who are active in trades having the most utility to be generated in great profusion, and so their value is not great, since they are, in a word, the bread and wine of humanity; but learned men and philosophers, who may be called the jewels among talents, rightfully have a very high price.
>
> (Galiani 1987: 34)[9]

Since Galiani was known for his great wit, it is hard to discern whether through this comparison he is either affirming or deflating a deeply entrenched perception about their own self-worth still held by many scholars and philosophers. But whether or not they should be flattered by this comparison with gems and hence their own relative uselessness in comparison to tradespeople, Galiani is addressing an economic question about the relation of value and price that had exercised Grotius (1583–1645) and then Pufendorf (1632–1694) and Locke (1632–1704), along with a host of lesser known Enlightenment writers and economic pamphleteers.[10] It is also, however, a question mooted among ancient philosophers[11] concerning why it is that some things like gems, although useless, can demand a higher price than more useful and abundant commodities such as bread and wine.

One reason it is helpful to look at Galiani's work is because he is straightforward in his claims that his ambition is to surpass Epicureanism and Stoicism in his arguments. Many earlier and later Enlightenment theorists often seem to be merely helping themselves to Epicurean and Stoic arguments, and indeed, they sometimes merely paraphrase scattered passages from Cicero's works without attribution. Such habits of citation can make claims about influence even more complex. Fortunately, apart from Galiani's overall importance in the origins of modern economic theory, he views himself to be in a sort of ongoing contest with Hellenistic philosopher and he insists that his account is able to overcome their limitations.

At first glance, Galiani's general claim about scarcity and the distribution of talents might seem to also reflect a background moralistic strain that both Stoics and Epicureans share. That is, material goods such as bread and wine can be generated in great abundance, but that is not worth much in value compared to the intellectual attainments of scholars and philosophers, which are scarcer. The mass of humanity is concerned with the former, while only a few manage to become scholars and philosophers. Although such general observations about scarcity and value in relation to human beings themselves become a source of dispute in the period between those with more Platonizing hierarchical views and those espousing more egalitarian Epicurean and Stoic views, Galiani in this passage is primarily concerned to show that laws, in this case the providential laws of God, govern the amounts of various "goods" that occur in the world by causing the generation of more tradespeople than philosophers. Contemporary readers used to value-free conceptions of economics may find such an appeal to God either otiose or quaint, but its importance for the period should not be underestimated.[12]

Here, though, we must enter controversial waters since one of the most characteristic features of the "new economic science" is usually thought to be that it aspired to models of inquiry parallel to the other sciences and that it had freed itself from the moral-theological framework of the Middle Ages, where economic thinking had been part of the larger portfolio of theologians and scholastic jurists. A long line of social and economic theorists, beginning with most prominently, Max Weber (1921–22/1978), [13] has seen the economic thought of the period as mutually entwined with the growth of secular capitalism, the goal of which is to master everything by means of rational calculation and to reduce it to processes of production that are amenable to exact calculation. For Weber, this economic rationalization transformed all older structures of ethics, law, religion, and psychology in

order to fit organizational patterns of predictability and rational control. One famous product of this process, he argued, is the *Berufsmensch,* or "professional man," as outlined in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/5). As the earlier religious roots of beliefs and of life in general began to wither and become empty with the growth of capitalism, they were replaced by the rational calculations of the capitalistic workplace. Thus, the industrious capitalistic "professional man" became the economic successor of religiously fervent individuals imbued with a Protestant ethic of hard work in the service of God. One crucial result of these economic processes was the secularization of life, which for some theorists meant the corresponding creation of lives surrounded by existential nothingness in the place of earlier forms of religious faith. It also meant that economic analysis and theory themselves were taken to be grounded in facts, free from the distortions of subjective moral and religious values.

Again, these are large questions, but some initial general observations may be helpful. First of all, Galiani and the economic thinkers of the so-called School of Salamanca ("The School of Salamanca" 2011),[14] for instance, were in Catholic countries, and many historians place the origins of capitalism in the Italian city-states rather than in the Protestant North. Thus, Weber's claim about the generative link between Protestantism and capitalism is, at best, causally limited. Also, we should distinguish economic theories from economic practices, and whether or not a new secular ethos of work developed in what Smith calls the "commercial society" of this period, it seems clear that many economic theorists of the time seriously invoked divine providence in their explanatory frameworks.

By the same token, it is important to be careful about the conceptions of God and divine providence that are being assumed in these discussions. Jill Kraye (2008) has offered compelling arguments that one needs to distinguish what we might describe broadly as the Divine rational providence of Stoicism—the God of the philosophers—from a God of personal appeal and miraculous intervention of the sort espoused by various forms of Protestantism. So, for instance, in the case of Galiani, he invokes the "Suprema Mano" which has arranged the world for our economic benefit; but this hand of God—which strikingly predates Smith's "invisible hand"— does not respond to the disordered desires, emotions, and demands of individuals at a personal level. It sustains and embodies the economic laws of the world for the sake of our general benefit with causal regularity.

Of course, such a Stoic conception of rational Providence was not without a host of theological difficulties in the context of European cultures espousing a revealed religion based on a sacred text that had recorded a series of divine interventions in human history. Nor did anyone seriously identify it with Zeus or wonder how divine rational *pneuma* could be co-extensive with all cosmic matter. But a significant group of philosophers and economic thinkers of the period espoused a Stoic inspired notion of divine providence that served as a way of grounding in nature the various causal laws of human behavior that they were discovering.

With that in mind, we can return to Galiani's argument about rarity and utility and turn to two representative texts from Hellenistic philosophy that were both circulating and resonating in this argumentative context, one from a Stoic perspective and the other from the Skeptical tradition

The first is a text from the first half of the first century CE attributed to Philo of Alexandria that imputes to the providence of God and nature an objective view of value and its relation to utility:

> If, then, fixing the eyes of the mind steadily upon the truth, you should be inclined to contemplate the providence of God as far as the powers of human reason are

> capable of doing it, then, when you have attained to a closer conception of the true and only good, you will laugh at those things which belong to men which you for some time admired.… (10) Therefore, admiring that godlike excellence and beauty, you will by all means perceive that none of the things previously mentioned were by themselves thought worthy of the better portion by God. On which account the mines of silver and gold are the most worthless portion of the earth, which is altogether and wholly unfit for the production of fruits and food; (11) for abundance of riches is not like food, a thing without which one cannot live. And the one great and manifest test of all these things is hunger, by which it is seen what is in truth really necessary and useful; for a person when oppressed by hunger would gladly give all the treasures in the whole world in exchange for a little food; (12) but when there is an abundance of necessary things poured out in a plentiful and unlimited supply, and flowing over all the cities of the land, then we, the citizens, indulging luxuriously in the good things provided by nature, are not contented to stop at them alone, but set up satiated insolence as the guide of our lives, and devoting ourselves to the acquisition of silver and gold, and of everything else by which we hope to acquire gain, proceed in everything like blind men, no longer exciting the eyes of our intellect by reason of our covetousness, so far as to see that riches are but the burden of the earth, and are the cause of continual and uninterrupted war instead of peace.[15]
>
> (*On Providence* (Fragment II); Eusebius, *P.E.* 8.14.386–39 (trans. Yonge))

Philo becomes an extremely important source in the early modern period because of the way that he associates natural law with God's divine will. Grotius, for instance, in his *De jure belli ac pacis* cites him well over a hundred times and Philo's conception of "natural reason" was a crucial source for his own conception of natural law.[16] Philo argues in this passage that from the divine perspective, individuals make mistakes about the relations of value and utility, and that it is in conditions of scarcity that individuals come to understand what is of real value. The moral tone is familiar from Stoic texts[17] and also the general view of the necessities of life, though Philo implicitly links providence and abundance in a way that was to prove attractive to a whole series of early modern thinkers. This theme, for instance, was taken up and endorsed by both Grotius and Pufendorf, though it came into collision with the Skeptical text below, which denied that there was any objective basis for our perceptions of scarcity and abundance, and hence our perceptions of utility and value.[18]

At *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I.36, Sextus Empiricus ascribes ten "tropes" or "modes" to older skeptics, though at *Against the Professors* 7.35, he attributes them to Aenesidemus, and for the most part, their provenance was understood in this way during the period. The ninth mode reflects the general procedure of the rest of the modes. It attempts to get us to realize that there are equal and opposing considerations for dogmatic arguments, in this case about either the rarity or frequency of any particular external event or object:

> In connection with the mode based on the constancy or infrequency of occurrence, which we say is the ninth in order, we consider such items as the following. the sun is certainly a much more marvellous thing than a comet. But since we see the sun all the time but the comet only infrequently, we marvel at the comet so much as even to suppose it a divine portent, but we do nothing like that for the sun. If, however, we thought of the sun as appearing infrequently and setting infrequently, and as illuminating everything all at once and then suddenly being eclipsed, we would find much to marvel at in the matter. And earthquakes are not equally

> troublesome to the person who is experiencing one for the first time and to the person who has become accustomed to them. And how marvellous is the sea to the person who sees it for the first time! And a beautiful human body that is seen suddenly and for the first time excites us more than if it were to become a customary sight. Things that are rare seem precious, but things that are familiar and easy to get do not. Indeed, if we thought of water as rare, how much more precious it would appear than all the things that do seem precious! And if we imagine gold simply scattered on the ground like stones, to whom do we think it would then be precious and worth hoarding away? Since, then, the same things, depending on whether they occur frequently or infrequently, seem at one time marvellous or precious and at another time not, we infer that we shall perhaps be able to say how each of these appears when it occurs frequently or when it occurs infrequently, but that we shall not be able to state without qualification how each of the external objects is. And, accordingly, via this mode too we withhold assent as regards them.
>
> (*PH* 1.141–44; trans. Mates)[19]

The goal of this passage is to get us to see how any dogmatic claim about the frequency that something occurs can be opposed by a claim of equal strength about its rarity; we then will suspend judgment about it. Moreover, there is a further moral one might draw from this passage. Because of the force of habit, no one marvels at seeing the sun arise in the east every morning, although one may take a comet to be a divine portent because we rarely experience them. Our ordinary understanding of the world depends on such customary habits of expectation although they capture nothing that is objectively the case about the world. Sextus's argument about rarity and frequency entered the early modern tradition through Montaigne's *An Apology for Raymond Sebond* [20] and some Hume scholars[21] have suggested that it may have played a role in his idea that by repeatedly observing regularities, we come to associate them as being connected, and thus to expect those connections to hold in the future, finally coming to believe them to be necessary.

In any case, Galiani was keen to counter such skeptical arguments and he did so in his overall theory of money by claiming that its value too is not conventional, as Lucretius[22], for instance, and the rest of the ancients had wrongly thought. Galiani argues that money finds its foundation in the *utilita, rarita, and fatica* of metals themselves—a kind of metallist stance that anticipates later theorists such as the founder of the Austrian School of economics, Carl Menger (1840–1921). For Galiani, God's natural laws govern the causal laws of money, and metals are used as money because they are valuable; they do not become valuable through convention or in being used.

Although we have hardly begun to scratch the surface, it is probably time to call a halt to this brief tour. Indeed, I would hardly claim that this kind of scattershot presentation of a few Hellenistic texts connected to one single argument about the paradox of value is remotely able to do justice to the complicated history of its origins and its subsequent reception and circulation. But the hope is that even this kind of cursory review can offer a glimpse into the many roles that Hellenistic philosophical texts and arguments played in shaping both the intellectual milieu and form that such economic arguments could take.

In closing, I want to address a few general questions that often structure discussions of the thought of this period. I began by noting that Galiani was known as the "Epicurean, though we have seen that he subscribed to a view of providence that would be anathema to ancient Epicureans. Gassendi to be sure had earlier attempted to link Epicurean hedonism with Stoic providentialism, and this is one tack that "Epicureanism" took in the period.

"Epicurean," however, often served as a synonym for "atheist," recalling a charge from antiquity that Epicureans, because of their denial of divine concern or intervention in human affairs, were really covert atheists. Of course, Epicurus himself had insisted that the gods were real living entities. At *Letter to Menoeceus* 123 he clearly states: "For there are gods; the knowledge of them is consequently clear." For ancient Epicureans, the gods exist and their existence is what makes knowledge of them both possible and *enarges* [clear].[23] But atheists of the period easily took on the mantle of being "Epicurean," without, of course, affirming the existence of a group of blessed Epicurean gods enjoying the most complete and undisturbed pleasures. A corresponding flexibility holds true in the connotations of "Stoicism," which often signified either an affirmation of divine providence or of our natural sociability—the latter doing scant justice to the rich complexities of ancient stoic views about our drive for self-preservation and rational self-perfection in relation to others. By the same token, what is often meant in the period by "Stoic sociability" is merely commercial sociability that, in turn, is typically contrasted with "Epicurean" commercial rapaciousness.[24] Neither of these map onto ancient philosophical doctrines directly, and we have to be careful in calibrating exactly where particular arguments lie on this extremely fluid spectrum.

This is not to say that there has not been much significant scholarly work in detailing these "Epicurean" and "Stoic" features of the period, and more recently, in a series of powerfully argued and influential articles, Istvan Hont[25] has shown that even these broad categories used by many political and social historians need to be integrated more fully in conceptions of the economic and political statecraft of the period. At the same time, Hont defends the idea that there are radical paradigm shifts that undercut the notion that one can trace out conceptions across generations, much less millennia. Thus, for instance, he denies the influential claim that conceptions of Roman *libertas* or republican liberty were strongly resonating in the political thought of the period,[26] choosing to underline instead worries about personal security and the ability of commercial monarchies to afford protection to their citizens.

These discussions in disciplines parallel to ancient philosophy have tended to lose track of one central feature of the thought of the period, however. It is no doubt true that labels such as "Epicurean" and "Stoic"—or as some scholars prefer, "neo-Epicurean"[27] and "neo-Stoic"—pick out important characteristics about various individuals, their intellectual affiliations, the nature of the arguments they propounded and rejected, etc. By tracing out such intellectual self-identification, historians of the period can offer nuanced accounts of the give and take between proponents of these two "ancient philosophical positions" on a wide variety of philosophical, political and economic topics. Nonetheless, what still falls out of such accounts is the actual interaction of the thinkers in this period with the texts they were reading, at least in the following sense. We know, say, that Locke worked on a commentary on Cicero's *De Officiis* over the course of his life and thought in depth about the arguments he found there in favor of private property. Locke's own famous and influential theory of private property can certainly be presented on its own as both a product and response to the particular political and social forces of the period, as an historian such as Hont might emphasize. Or we might wonder, as scholars of early modern thought do, about how Locke's view falls in line with "Epicurean" or "Stoic" thinking of the period. These are both productive and worthy ways of going about the problem of understanding Locke's theory. Or we might, bracketing all of these contexts, analyze how well his arguments stand up to a series of philosophical objections independently of their historical context, as some academic philosophers do. But there still remain crucial features of his argument that drop out of all these approaches, for instance, the way that Locke himself came to develop his

argument as he thought about and grappled with Cicero's claims and adopted key features of *De Officiis* in his own theory. We need to, in short, remember what Locke took his intellectual milieu to be and who he took his interlocutors to actually be. In the case of most of the figures of the period, among their most important interlocutors were Hellenistic philosophers. As one reads his letters, we see that for Locke himself, Cicero and the Hellenistic philosophical arguments found in his works were not ghostly and anachronistic remnants from the past whose force was undermined by recent commercial developments. They were often uppermost, along with the Bible, in his thinking. To trace from such a standpoint the lineaments of one thinker's interactions with his predecessors, even across millennia, is a painstakingly complicated task. Showing a few stray connections between a few texts on one single question, as I have done here, is hardly sufficient for the task. But by effacing Hellenistic philosophy and its role in the thought of the major figures of the period, we lose something important. We also risk further particularizing historical analysis in a way that makes past periods mute—and this at a time when the last thing that most disciplines need is even more insularity, solipsism, and an inability to speak beyond their narrow confines.

Notes

1 One exception was the so-called "Austrian School" of economics. Ludwig von Mises, for instance, makes the following general claim: "The historical role of the theory of the division of labor as elaborated by British political economy from Hume to Ricardo consisted in the complete demolition of all metaphysical doctrines concerning the origin and the operation of social cooperation. It consummated the spiritual, moral and intellectual emancipation of mankind inaugurated by the philosophy of Epicureanism" (von Mises 2010: 147).
2 Schumpeter did not live to complete this book so some have speculated that he might have said more about the Hellenistic period, though he devotes a whole chapter to the decline of analytical vigor after Aristotle and is not forthcoming about later influences from Hellenistic thinkers.
3 Beginning with Carlo Natali's clarion call to action (Natali 1995).
4 See the important work of Tsouna (2012).
5 See, for instance, Toulmin (1990).
6 For discussion of Smith's diamond-water paradox in its historical context see Blaug (1997), Chapter 2.
7 See, for instance, Hawley (2019). The relation of Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to his *Wealth of Nations* is such a tortured question, that I think it might be less confusing to focus on earlier economic thinkers to whom he is indebted.
8 Cf. Cicero *Att.* 6.1.3; 5.21.10–12; 6.1.6–7, 2.7–10.3.5–7. For discussion, see Rauh (1986). The significant influence of Cicero on Locke's thinking has been the subject of a growing body of work. Among the most comprehensive and useful studies is Marshall (1994).
9 There apparently is one English edition of *On Money* trans. Peter Toscano University of Chicago Microfilms (University of Chicago, 1977). The translations are my own.
10 These were collected and commented on by Bernardo Davanzati, *Lezione delle monete* (1588) on which see Hengstmengel 2019: 121–2. To even begin to give a satisfactory historical account of this issue one would have trace out the Hellenistic contribution in the accounts of three thinkers mutually caught up in Cicero's philosophical works, Hugo Grotius, *De iure belli ac pacis* (1625); Samuel Pufendorf, *Elementorum jurisprudentiae universalis* (1660); and John Locke "Some Considerations on the Consequences of Lowering the Interest and Raising the Value of Money" (1691).
11 Beginning with Plato's *Euthydemus,* where Socrates observes: "For it is the rare, Euthydemus, that has a high price [*timion*], while water, though best as Pindar said, has the cheapest." (304b3-5).
12 Hengstmengel (2019) gives a brilliant and synthetic account of the crucial role that conceptions of Divine Providence played in the formulation of Early Modern economic thought. For an important discussion of "the providential abundance of necessities" see his pp. 111–32, which goes into far greater depth and detail than I can provide here.

13 For more in this vein, see Taylor (2007).
14 See also, Schumpeter (1954) for their economic theory, which he describes as being the first "modern scientific" account of economics.
15 For Philo in general see the authoritative Lévy (2018).
16 See the important discussion of Jones (2013).
17 Seneca, *De. Ben.* 7.10; *Ep. Mor.* 94.56 ff for the view that gold had been providentially hidden by the divine, but that humankind had greedily sought it out to its own detriment. Cf. for further discussion and references. Cf. Hengstmengel 2019: 155
18 See, for instance, Pufendorf (1660).
19 Mates (1996: 97).
20 Brush (1996). Montaigne never mentions Sextus after writing *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, but he again takes up questions of scarcity and abundance in the *Essays* in step, at least on some theories, with his own overall moves from Skepticism, to Stoicism, and finally to Epicureanism.
21 See, for instance, Parvsnikova 2016: 51–2. Smith's view of the role of habit, as opposed to reason, both in our moral life and in our actions in commercial society bears mentioning in this context.
22 Galiani's uncle Celestino commissioned Alessandro Marchetti to do the first translation of Lucretius into Italian, which was denied publication by the Neapolitan authorities until after his death in 1717 (see Ferrone 1982). Galiani denies that the value of gold is arbitrary and depends on human desire in contrast to *DRN* 5. 1268–83.
23 A small group of scholars have maintained that, even despite such straightforward statements as these, Epicurus thought that gods were psychological entities. Recent papyrological evidence has finally put this view to rest. For details, see Piergiacomi (2017); Spinelli and Verde (2020). The notion of gods being psychological constructs might make the charge of atheism seem more within the bounds of possibility. However, the fact that Epicureans denied any divine concern or interest in human affairs seems to have been sufficient for charges of atheism.
24 See T. O'Keefe, this volume for the contrasting ancient Epicurean view.
25 A representative group is collected in Hont (2005).
26 See Skinner (2012) for a crisp statement of his view and his historical methodology.
27 See the excellent collection of articles in Leddy and Lifschitz (2009), which does not mention, however, the word "economics."

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